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VOLUME 01 NO. 03

NOVEMBER 1998

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11

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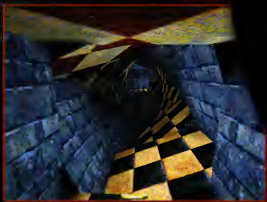
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brought Garret out
of the shadows...



Original Garret concept sketch, 1997.

THIEF

THE DARK PROJECT

...and into the
limelight.

Garret, stealthy star of
Thief: The Dark Project, 1998

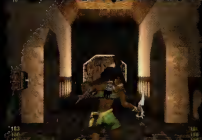


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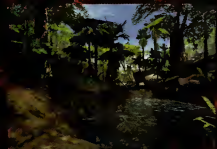
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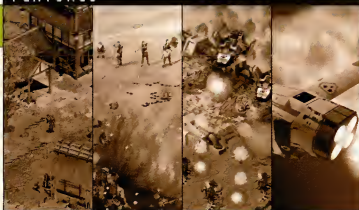
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ON THE COVER

The cover digital illustration was created by QI. Big thanks to MacAddict Associate Art Director Adam Vanderhoof for helping us draw the M16 rifle the soldier is holding. And, thanks to Adobe for creating a program called Photoshop.

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CELEBRITY APPEARANCES

Mitch Gayland, Scooby Doo, Bill Clinton (of late), Monica Lewinsky (even more), Enya, David Lee Roth, Jesse "The Body" Ventura, Rob Zondra, Michael Jackson, Joe Voigt, Angelica Jolie, the cigar in question, Martin Sheen, Charlie Sheen, Shania Twain, naughty Gen Y rapists, Enya Derris, Ronald Reagan, Richard Nixon, J.F.K., Albus Malfoy, Christina Applegate, Catherine Zeta Jones, Princess Di, James Dean, Bruce Kelly, Robert Downey Jr., Matthew Broderick, Sarah Jessica Parker, Dick Clark, Glenn Stewart, Noel and the Gang, E.T., Winnie the Pooh, The Osborn Gang, and The Perfect Woman

THE DISC



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Use our complicated, yet graphically pleasing, chart to confuse yourself further. Or you could just put the disc in your computer and figure it out for yourself

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- PC Gamer



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EDITOR'S LETTER

TELL ME WHAT YOU REALLY THINK

The last several months have been a major roller-coaster ride here at PC ACCELERATOR, and after much hard work and plenty of late nights we've managed to deliver three issues to our demanding public. The feedback from ravenous readers and anal retentive weasels has been amazing. Thankfully, about 98% of the letters we've received have ranged from positive to fanatic. You have no idea how good it feels to get letters from people who really "get" what we're trying to do. To this end I want more. How are we doing? What parts of our mag made you laugh, cringe, or shriek in delight? How is the info? Are our reviews on the nose? What do you really think of Dan "Attack Dog" Egger? What about our covers and design? Are Q! and Kyle artistic or autistic? (We actually believe them to be both.) We make this magazine for you and need to know if we are getting it right. This input will either be put directly into a computer and formulated to create issue #4, or else we'll look it over and ignore all the comments because we know we are right, dammit.

As for this issue you are holding right now, I believe it to be our best yet. The cover story on RTS games is a great chance to see what lies ahead in this amazingly popular genre. With 11 in-depth previews, I'm betting PCXL contains more info and screenshots on the games you really care about. Throw in our usual collection of reviews, news-ish stuff, celebrity bashing, and smart-ass comments and you've got another issue that demands to be read cover to cover. I also want to remind all of our readers that a daily visit to <http://pcxl.ign.com> is required by law. The site is guaranteed to make you laugh — and besides, we frag 260 people a year (that is one a weekday).

THE TEAM

EDITOR IN CHIEF



MIKE SALMON
IN THIS PICTURE HE IS ACTUALLY—
Using the shadows to cover up a really big smile
IN THE INDUSTRY HE IS KNOWN AS—
A drunk and occasionally naked fool
BAD HABITS— Launches into his sick-sweetly sweet "girlfriend story" when Franca calls
MOST LIKELY TO— Send fat letters to himself under fake names like Pamela Anderson
NOW PLAYING— Quake II, Rainbow Six, NCAA Football 99, NFL 99

Again, let me know what you think about the mag, website, and disc. We'll keep getting better with your help.

MIKE SALMON, Editor in Chief

EXECUTIVE EDITOR



ROB SMITH
IN THIS PICTURE HE IS ACTUALLY—
Checking out the photographer's cleavage
IN THE INDUSTRY HE IS KNOWN AS—
The guy who is playing Half Life before anyone else
BAD HABITS— Incessant yo-yoing when thinking
MOST LIKELY TO— Be confused by our constant American pop-culture references
NOW PLAYING— Rainbow Six, Quake II, Half Life (ha, ha!)

MANAGING EDITOR



CARRIE SHEPHERD
IN THIS PICTURE SHE IS ACTUALLY—
Frosted that I sit in this chair named IN THE INDUSTRY SHE IS KNOWN AS—
Goth girl
BAD HABITS— Keeps demanding we hand in our stories on time
MOST LIKELY TO— Own handcuffs and black leather lingerie
NOW PLAYING— Bubble Trouble (on her Mac), Dark Vengeance, and with the idea of murdering everyone on staff

ASSOCIATE EDITOR



DAN EGGER
IN THIS PICTURE HE IS ACTUALLY—
Screen-testing to be the local news anchor in Toolseum
IN THE INDUSTRY HE IS KNOWN AS—
Attack Dog for his vicious reviews
BAD HABITS— Constantly eating Styrofoam packing peanuts (We can't make up this kind of shit)
MOST LIKELY TO— Work 24 hours straight without actually getting anything done
NOW PLAYING— Rainbow Six, NCAA Football 99, NBA Live 99

DISC/ASSISTANT EDITOR



ED "SLASH" LEE
IN THIS PICTURE HE IS ACTUALLY—
Not wearing any pants
IN THE INDUSTRY HE IS KNOWN AS—
That guy who got sick and fell asleep under a table at the Tomb Raider party
BAD HABITS— Putting off procrastinating
MOST LIKELY TO— Own handcuffs and black leather lingerie
NOW PLAYING— Rainbow Six, Rainbow Six, Rainbow Six

ART DIRECTOR



Q! DOROQUEZ
IN THIS PICTURE HE IS ACTUALLY—
Wearing a halberd
IN THE INDUSTRY HE IS KNOWN AS—
We don't let him out in the industry for obvious reasons
BAD HABITS— Sending pornographic (and usually X-rated) pictures to the team
MOST LIKELY TO— Utter obscenities, sexist comments at the NOW convention
NOW PLAYING— Rainbow Six, NCAA Football 99, VR Baseball 2000

ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR



KYLE LeBOEUF
IN THIS PICTURE HE IS ACTUALLY—
Smiling on the inside
IN THE INDUSTRY HE IS KNOWN AS—
Mr. Smooth
BAD HABITS— Attention deficit disorder
MOST LIKELY TO— Move in on fellow employees' targets just for one night of unbridled passion
NOW PLAYING— Forsaken, Unreal, StarCraft

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PC ACCELERATOR is published monthly by Imagine Media, Inc., 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005, USA. Newsstand distribution is handled by the Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (\$2 issues): US: \$30; Canada: \$44; Foreign: \$54; pre-paid, US funds only. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST #R12320688). For customer service, call 800-333-3890; in US, 415-468-2500. For back issues, call 800-865-7240. POSTMASTER send changes of address to PC ACCELERATOR, PO Box 52681, Boulder, CO 80322.

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Advice from Dawnde's mom: "If you eat multi-berries right off the bush, you'll get worms."
Advice from Dan's mom: "Gentlemen don't do that." Dan does not know what this means, but he's sure to be doing it.

Second and third class in the following offices: A1, A2, A3, B, C
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Microsoft

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OH DISC!

DISCABANA

We make the discs that make the young girls cry

In this month's guest artist is Barry Manilow. Take it, Barry! "I've been around for three months and I made the very first disc. I put the demos and patches together. I am the disc editor and I make the discs."

Thank you, thank you! Another one? Well, OK ...

"Oh Margy. Well you came and you brought me a turkey.

On your vacation away from worky."

Thank you! We can't thank you enough! Now play the disc already!

(It is now official: Ed is high on drugs. We apologize for any discomfort this may have caused.)

DEMO
PATCHES
TOOLS
MAPS
A/V
STRATEGY
RATING

D	◆				9	RAINBOW SIX	The game that almost killed issues #2 and #3. Here's the demo, as well as the latest patches
D						WING COMMANDER SECRET OPS	Didn't have four hours to download this 128MB monster? We don't blame you, here's the full version
D						U2000	An update of an '80s classic. Prevent the red goop from taking over everything
D					7	MOTOCROSS MADNESS	Be just like Evel with some crazy stunts
D						SPEEDBUSTERS	75,000 downloads can't be wrong. Can it?
	◆				9	UNREAL	Try the OpenGL patch and a few fixes for UnrealEd. (No, not the polygonal version of our disc editor)
D					5	RETURN FIRE 2	Excellent graphics on 3Dfx, and a fun game once you get the hang of the controls (which isn't likely)
D						CARMAGEDDON II	This gorefest is surprisingly good under 3D acceleration. Killing pedestrians has never looked better
D					8	GAMEDAY 99	Here's your chance to compare side-by-side against the PlayStation version and congratulate yourself for being a PC owner
D						ARMY MEN	It's like real war, except it's fought with plastic men
	◆					QUAKE II	Version 3.19 is the latest in an endless line of updates
D						GUNMETAL	A good example of the ever-popular "flying tank" game
D					7	TIGER WOODS 99	Are you good enough to be Tiger-ific? Play the demo and find out
D					8	NCAA FOOTBALL 99	One of the strongest football games ever for the PC
D						THE CREED	A third-person action game set in a futuristic city. Also Apollo's last name
D						BHUNTER	Sort of like a simulator for the flying car in Blade Runner (and we thought it was the long-awaited insect-hunting game)
D					9	NEED FOR SPEED III	An updated version of the demo with some top-notch graphics



Our disc comes with a scrolling interface, which is operated by moving the mouse over the screen. If this is too complicated or you lack the motor skills, then the bar on the left can be used as well. Click left on the mouse to select items and click left again (on the image) to return to the previous screen. If you've ever installed a game, then the rest should be elementary.

REQUIREMENTS: WINDOWS 95, PENTIUM 133MHZ, 32MB RAM, DIRECTX 5.0, MOUSE, 100% SOUND BLASTER COMPATIBLE CARD

THE DISC MINI-FAQ

Q: Why is my disc not working under Windows 98?

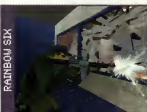
A: At this point, the disc should be Windows 98 compatible. However, some backward-compatibility issues could remain with some of the software on the disc. So blame those Microsoft bastards, not us!

Q: Why are the colors screwed up? You idiots!

A: Make sure your desktop is set to 16-bit color or higher before running.

Q: Why is my CD cracked in half? You P54@% idiots!

A: No good answer to that one. If this happens, or if the disc is missing, give your letter carrier a good talking to and call 800-333-3890 to get a replacement.



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APOCALYPSE

NOW AND LATER

REAL: As in real popular
TIME: As in time for some
 new games
STRATEGY: As in strategy is
 for wimps, right?

Nope. Realtime strategy games are as popular as they are because they are just plain fun to play. Also, they reward you for using your lump of gray matter a bit more than you do with a twitch shooter (OK, deep breath, we're not making fun of twitch shooters).

One of the best things about realtime strategy games (the good ones, anyway) is that they let you play many, many different styles so that truly, no two games will ever be the same. (Marketing slogan alert!) Both *SimCity*-weaned anal control freaks and frag- and explosion-happy *Quake*heads can find their own niche and style, whether it's turtling in their base or just cranking out troops.

However, this genre's been around for a while (beginning with the venerable *Dune 2*), and the tried-and-true gameplay ain't

getting any younger (worst example: *Dune 2000*). Of all the major genres, arguably there have been fewer changes made to RTS gameplay than any other. PCXL is sick to death of the phrase "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" appearing in game reviews like white on rice. We want more, dammit.

StarCraft and *Total Annihilation* came along and established themselves as the best of the new RTS games, shoving aside a slew of lesser imitators. What did these two games prove? That perfecting the finer features of familiar RTS game styles, and innovating in new, tech-driven directions can sell huge quantities of games as well as drive the genre forward. As soon as we heard about the slew of next-generation RTS games in the works, we decided we needed to go around and pass judgement on everything. The next breed is older, wiser, and hungrier. They've learned from watching others, from past successes (and failures), and are ready to get it on. But will they have what it takes?

Without any further ado, a lesson on what a good realtime strategy game should be.



<<B IS FOR BALANCE>>

StarCraft: Brood War

DEVELOPER: Blizzard

PUBLISHER: Cendant

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '98

What did *StarCraft* do right? Pretty much everything, but the finely tuned balance of the three races really makes it feel like three different games. The attention to detail is matched only by the complex web of strengths and weaknesses among the three races, which allows for dizzyingly creative and complex tactics and counter-tactics unseen in any other RTS game.

"From *StarCraft*'s inception, we knew that we wanted to create a game with three completely unique races," says Rob Pardo, one of *StarCraft*'s primary game balance designers. "Whereas in *Warcraft* we took a chess-piece approach with each side mirroring the other, in *StarCraft* we wanted each race to be very different in look, feel, and play style."

Balancing *StarCraft* was a mammoth undertaking, according to Pardo, because a change to one race set off a chain of effects

throughout the other races. After months of testing and retesting, it got to the point that every advanced tactic in the game has a suitable response by the other races — and the ones that don't have been addressed in the upcoming official expansion pack, *Brood War*.

Pardo, also the lead designer of this project, says that the new units were tailor-made to fill specific vacancies in each race's forces.

"After thousands of battle.net games, a few weaknesses were found against certain advanced tactics that could not be easily balanced through tweaking existing units." For example, the Pro-



toss have trouble with large masses of Zerg Mutalisks, the flying bugs. The new rapid-firing Corsair Interceptor is perfect for killing these pests. Other new units include the Terran Medic,

which, as you'd expect, can heal Terran infantry (making them that much more annoying), the Zerg Devourer (heavy air-to-air, previously absent from the Zerg), the Protoss Dark Templar, the Terran Valkyrie, and others. In addition to the dozens of new multiplayer maps, these units should extend *StarCraft*'s lifespan even further, as if it's in any danger of dying this millennium.

<<I IS FOR INTERFACE>>

Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun

DEVELOPER: Westwood

PUBLISHER: EA

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '98

The importance of interface design in a RTS game is often overlooked in favor of units, maps, and stuff like that. But the hectic gameplay

demand an interface that is powerful and intuitive, so the player doesn't get bogged down in a sea of frantic mouse clicks, hotkeys, and searching around the map. Everyone knows by now about *Tiberian Sun*'s groovy destructible

terrain and maps that evolve over the course of a battle, but we decided to spotlight the simple, powerful interface started up in *Dune 2* and which deserves a lot of credit for the mass-market success of *C&C* and *Red Alert*.

Erik Yeo, *Tiberian Sun*'s lead level designer, believes that a good interface is transparent, provides players with feedback (in the form of voices, sound effects, etc.), and keeps the mouse clicks required to do anything to a minimum. RTS games seem to be getting more and more complicated all the time, and while *Tiberian Sun* has its share of new features, the way they are implemented in the game might actually make it easier to tell your units what to do.

Says Yeo, "You can keep all the layers behind the scenes, and not make the player do simple things manually. I think too many companies making RTS games are in a feature war, and giving the players too much to do." For example, in *Tiberian Sun*, if you command a tank to fire up at a higher-positioned enemy, instead of circling around and attempting to climb to the same elevation, the tank will elevate its turret and fire upward. It's about taking the player's mind off the interface and getting it on the business at hand — building an army and killing the enemy.



<<T IS FOR TECHNOLOGY>>

Total Annihilation: Kingdoms

DEVELOPER: Cavedog
PUBLISHER: Cavedog
RELEASE DATE: March '99
The superb 3D engine powering the original *Total Annihilation* pushed the technology envelope a significant step forward. To this day, no game (with the possible exception of Bungie's *Myth*) has pulled off such a robust, solid-feeling RTS engine. The 3D-rendered units motor over 3D terrain. They fire 3D projectiles at each other that behave like you'd expect 3D projectiles to. It's just a big 3D party over at Cavedog.

So for its next project, *TA: Kingdoms*, Cavedog decided not to mess with its engine too much,

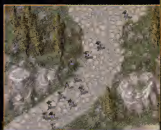
but to make just enough tweaks and enhancements to keep it technologically ahead of the competition. A fantasy-themed RTS, *Kingdoms* (TA meets *Worcraft II*) is a total conversion with four unique races — each based on the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. The elements dictate the style of that race, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. For example, the earth race is your traditional Camelot-style ground army, with infantry, archers, catapults, and the like. The water race rules the seas, and so on. And this will all look noticeably better and move faster than the original TA, due to a slew of new technology

features, including 3D-acceleration support and 16-bit color.

"A lot of what we've been doing is increasing the visual appeal of the game. Hardware compatibility lets us add colored lighting, special effects, and other features, which show up in things like lightning bolts, and fire — it's paying off big time," says Project Leader Clayton Kauzlaric. In addition, since the units now include dragons and wizards rather than tanks, they have to



be correspondingly more lifelike in their animations. The number of scripts per character has multiplied greatly, as one can see in just the nature of the dragon's range of motion in flight. "We're multiplying the details by 10," explains Kauzlaric. The 3D nature of the units allows them to have multiple types of motion for the same type of action. For example, a swordsman won't just have one set swing he does over and over, but many different types that are randomly assigned by the engine.



<<M IS FOR MAPS>>

Myth II: Soulblighter

DEVELOPER: Bungie
PUBLISHER: Bungie
RELEASE DATE: November '98
Myth and its soon-to-be released sequel, *Myth II*, are known for their superior map design. Basically gigantic bitmaps, there is no tiling of any kind (the most common map-building method in other RTS games), which really

makes each map unique in look and feel. Add varying elevation and rolling terrain, and you've got lots of opportunity for cunning tactical warfare — what *Myth II* is all about.

Combat is as much about using the environment to your advantage as the units themselves. The most straightforward example of

this is the use of elevation. Depending on how high up a ranged unit like an archer is, the farther they can shoot, because their arrows arch through the air. So an archer at the top of a hill might be able to hit an enemy at the bottom without getting hit himself. This concept has been expanded a step further in *Myth II*,

with the addition of many more 3D models, some of which animate (like a moving drawbridge and town gates) and some of which can be destroyed (blasting a hole through a wall with mortar-dwarves). Says Bungie's Doug Zartman, "The models serve as high-ground terrain, as shelters, and in the case of some animating models, as strategic objectives." New indoor environments add an element of close combat, where the enemy can suddenly appear from around a corner and your ranged units lose effectiveness.

Myth II's rotatable, zoomable camera goes hand and hand with the maps to improve tactics. They allow you to use cover more effectively: You can maneuver units behind cover like hills and trees and still see them by rotating the camera. Moving the camera is necessary for keeping an eye on your rear and flanks, says Zartman. "Enemy attacks often come from every direction, and if you're only facing where you think the enemy is, you're sure to be proven wrong in a very graphic way."



I HAVE AN ENORMOUS TANK BATTALION.

I HAVE AN ARSENAL OF WEAPONS AT MY FINGERTIPS.

I'VE DESTROYED BUILDINGS IN MY WAY.

SO WHY

I AM ONE WITH THE CROSSHAIRS.

I AM A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

DMS  100
PLD  68%

EGY  11
AMP  50%

Fox

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Microsoft

I'VE TELEPORTED INTO MY SATELLITE.

I'VE DRIVEN MY VEHICLES LIKE A MANIAC.

AM I DEAD?

I HAVE THE FIERCE AIR FORCE.

I TORCHED A TAERKAST BIPLANE.

I KNOW HOW TO DEFEND MY HOST STATION.

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URBAN ASSAULT™

<<I IS UH, ALSO FOR INNOVATION>>

Homeworld

DEVELOPER: Relic
PUBLISHER: Sierra
RELEASE DATE: February '99
 With its vast sense of scale, *Homeworld* better simulates a grand-scale space battle — or perhaps battle in general — than any game to date. Completely abandoning the 2D maps of traditional RTS games for a fully 3D space that is essentially empty might seem like a real pain to design, and it was.

Suspension of disbelief for the player was the main goal, according to Relic CEO and lead designer Alex Garden. "When we started on *Homeworld*, we were shooting to make the best action/space combat game ever made, and creating an epic scale would be a key part of making this possible." The closer a game universe is to the real universe we all live in, the harder it is to design, but the more rewarding the experience, says

Garden. "Traditional RTS games chose a more limited 'game universe' because first, they were more feasible on the hardware of the day, and second, because everyone assumed there had to be limits on the game world to make the game challenging enough. We feel a bit different, but seeing as how we haven't put *Homeworld* out for public scrutiny yet, time will tell if we were right or just on crack."

With this scale comes more complexity and more to keep track of — that's the tradeoff. Garden and his team were aware of this potential hurdle, and have tried to come up with ways of streamlining the interface to make it easier for the player to control units that are often incredibly far apart from each other. Getting a balance between helping the player too little and too much was a major obstacle at the beginning of development, according to Garden. They realized that the 3D world was going to be somewhat hard to adjust to, so they are trying to ease the player into it. All ships can be given specific or general orders. For example, instead of clicking on a resource collector and then specifying a destination to start collecting specific resources, you can give it a general command by hitting "h" and it will automatically seek out the nearest resources and harvest them. When you're pushing the gameplay experience somewhere it's never been thus far, you need to think on your feet.



<<L IS FOR LICENSE>>

Force Commander

DEVELOPER: LucasArts
PUBLISHER: LucasArts
RELEASE DATE: ???
 Now we're not saying that RTS games need a good license (look at *StarCraft* and *Total Annihilation*), but when you're talking about draw, the *Star Wars* license is the greatest in the history of licenses, right? Heck, *Star Wars* practically single-handedly

invented licensing as we know it today. In a way, this is the game that people wanted to play before the RTS genre was ever conceived. After seeing the movies, everyone wanted to be in charge of both the Rebels and the Imperial AT-ATs in that mammoth battle on Hoth. *Force Commander's* announcement made grown men grow weak with anticipation.

Unfortunately, LucasArts was unwilling to talk about specifics regarding *Force Commander*. Evidently internal debate rages regarding the right direction for the product. This time, it seems the company has learned that even the *Force* isn't enough to save a crap game like *Rebellion*, although the critical beating it took didn't seem to stop *Star Wars*

diehard who'll even play a slow, dull space colonization and trading sim so long as R2D2 features somewhere.

The upshot is that they've gone back to the drawing board and new information is unlikely to emerge from the ranch until way into next year. Actually it has nothing to do with the ranch; we just like saying that.

ON THE HORIZON

Some of the games we were hoping to include here have been either delayed past '99 or just announced. Here's a sneak peek at what you should expect to be hearing about sometime next year — the lineup for RTS 2000:

FORCE COMMANDER → Any details, please? Throw us a bone! Don't expect LucasArts to drop the ball on this one. They're guarding this like Yoda guards his cooking pots, or whatever he has in that little hut of his.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION → Pushed back to beyond '99, this is in the early planning stages. Cavedog says it's talking about a ground-up redesign, not just a sequel — a complete expansion to the concept of an RTS game. Design thus far has involved sitting around talking about what would be cool, and throwing various ideas around. In a way that Rage seems to have approached with *War of the Worlds*, one idea is creating another level of involvement in the person of a colonel (or four-

star general) that oversees multiple battles over many fronts — and you'll be able to pop into any battle. Cavedog is busy devising a method to coordinate this game-play mechanism successfully so that you really get that sense of being embroiled in a real war.

WARCRAFT III → You knew it was gonna happen. Early reports imply that it is going to push the boundaries of the genre that its predecessors helped create, but hey, you wouldn't have guessed that. Blizzard's

Rob Pardo says, "We have confirmed that we will do *Warcraft III*, and that when we do develop the game, it will be a jump from the current generation of RTS games." Hot off the presses, folks ...

DARK REIGN → *Dark Reign* seemed to get a little swallowed by the impact (if not massive commercial success) of *TA*. But the pathfinding routines and variable unit tactics certainly gave it a chance in the retail market. For the sequel, Producer Josh Resnick is

promising that you're going to get more up-close and personal with the conflict. Getting involved in the action in a personal way and getting drawn into the environment should make you care more about your units and their impact on the game world.

BLACK AND WHITE → Not a RTS game in the traditional sense, this latest offbeat brainchild of high-concept developer Peter Molyneux is a combination of "resource management (in this case human

resources), spellcasting skills that rely on dexterity and practice, battle strategy, and parenting skills — played in real-time." Sort of an extension of his groundbreaking *Populous*, the game puts the player in the role of a godlike being who gains magical energy from the worship of the denizens of a planet below. The multi-player game will involve multiple beings casting spells at each other and controlling huge familiars, powerful altered beasts that do their masters' bidding.

Map

I DEPLOYED MY GUYS USING THE TRANSPARENT MAP.

I TOLD MY GUYS TO ATTACK FROM BOTH FLANKS.

I KNOW WHERE THE TECH UPGRADE SECTOR IS.

I KNOW WHERE TO PLACE MY HOST STATION.

I KNOW WHERE THE POWER STATIONS ARE.

SO WHY AM I STILL DEAD?

I SAW A MYKONIAN CUBOID FORMATION.

I'M BEING SMART ABOUT MY MOVES.

I KNOW WHICH SECTORS ARE SECURE.



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URBAN ASSAULT

Age of Empires II

DEVELOPER: Ensemble Studios

PUBLISHER: Microsoft

RELEASE DATE: Q1 '99

It's all about replay value and presenting interesting decisions for the player at all times. Of all current RTS games, *Age of Empires* with its array of different cultures went the extra mile in giving players huge amounts of content to keep track of and experiment with — almost like *Civilization* meets C&C in real-time for its cerebral style and base-building orientation. Overall it was an excellent RTS game with only a few flaws (like laughable pathfinding) that its sequel, *Age of Empires II*, hopes to address.

One of the ways it will do this, according to Lead Designer Bruce Shelley, is by making the various civilizations more unique. Besides their special attributes, each will have a unique unit that only they can build (for example, the Japanese will have Samurai warriors). Shelley feels the subtle differences among civilizations were a key factor in *Age of Empires*'s



success — and *Age of Empires II* will take that a step further.

"Every civilization plays differently, and good players will learn how to take advantage of their own strengths and enemy weaknesses. Learning those intricacies will be fun and take time, and will help ensure the continuing success of *Age of Empires*."

Along with the sheer number of civilizations, units, technologies, and things to keep track of, Shelley is concerned about alienating the casual gamer. He doesn't want *Age of Empires II* to get needlessly complicated, while retaining its hallmark depth. "While the hardcore have developed flexible strategies to get themselves through the build-

up quickly and on to conquest, the casual gamers linger during the build-up phase because they find it very engaging. We think other RTS games erred by not making the build-up phase interesting or largely leaving it out. More complication and deeper play will work only if it keeps the player interested."

Dungeon Keeper 2

DEVELOPER: Bullfrog

PUBLISHER: EA

RELEASE DATE: Q1 '99

There's not much fun to be had building an army when you can't give them a right bollocking (this is a Rob-ism™) when they screw up, or because you just get a kick out of inflicting needless pain on

subservient creatures. *Dungeon Keeper* delivered all that and more with an evil grin. Pimp-slapping imps so that they ran and dug faster, throwing Dark Mistresses in the torture chamber just to hear their squeals of pleasure — ahhh. The black humor struck a sadistic, evil chord in all of us — being bad

is always gonna be much cooler than being good, and *DK* took that idea to the extreme. It was drenched in the attitude that has made Bullfrog's games that much more memorable. It separates 'em from the pack, and has an overall vision — in this case, a twisted one — that makes playing it that much more fun.

Self-proclaimed "sadistic" Producer Nick Goldsworthy says that the attitude is back in *DK2*, and more of it. This is encapsulated in the increased role of the Horned Reaper, a bigass demon-type thing — one of a wide cast of characters each with 30 independent stats that determine their behavior and personality. "Horny," as Goldsworthy calls him, will get repeatedly sidetracked as he searches for good guys to squish. If he spots chickens (the monsters' food) he will step on the "little chappies." He'll also wolf whistle if he spots the sexy Dark Mistress as she beckons him into her domain. The other dungeon minions will step aside in his honor, and the imps have a habit



of following him in single file but will scatter when he turns and growls with irritation.

DK2's gameplay changes are centered around improving strategic combat (a weakness in the first) as well as creature management — two things central to good RTS games. "Before, the player just used to train and train, pick up a handful of creatures and throw them down onto one spot, and hope for the best," says Goldsworthy. "The new combat system will not allow an abundance of creatures on one spot, so the player will have to think of the best strategies to use in accordance with what creatures are available."



<<S IS FOR SCOPE>>

The War of the Worlds

DEVELOPER: Rage
PUBLISHER: GT Interactive
RELEASE DATE: Q2 '98
War of the Worlds has a sense of scope that is both ambitious and incredibly appealing. Not mission based like a traditional RTS game, it puts you in a role that is closer to a four-star general, overseeing many battles on multiple fronts (over the British Isles), rather than being stuck in one confrontation.

The entire game unfolds in real-time over 30 sectors of land. As the general, you have to choose which sector to attack, when to attack, how many units to attack with, what defenses to construct,

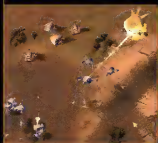
what units to research, and so on. It's a realtime strategy campaign on a grand scale.

Large-scale tactics and resource management that allows you to plan ahead should really increase the strategic depth, if that's what you're into. The game is based on Jeff Wayne's *War of the Worlds* concept album, which was sort of a musical interpretation of the H.G. Wells novel. So as the human general, you have to send in your biplanes and little tanks to fight against the Martians' death machines and gigantic, spiderlike, er, things. You can also play as the Martians,

with fewer but much more powerful units.

Producer Steve Sargent says, "In some ways it's a bit like the game Risk. It's cool to be able to

play the aliens for a change. Each side has completely different weaponry and interfaces, so it really makes a difference which side you control."

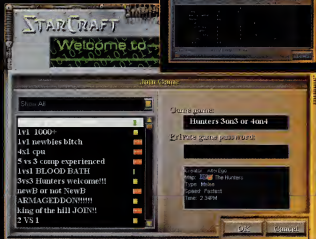


<<S IS ALSO FOR SUPPORT>>

Blizzard's battle.net

Battle.net has definitely been one of *StarCraft*'s big assets. In ease of use and speed, it really made it accessible for new players, but powerful enough that you can instantly find your friends online for a game. According to Rob Pardo, "We design our games so that when we release a product, we provide both a challenging single-player component and an addictive

multiplayer experience. *StarCraft*'s success cannot be attributed to solely one or the other, but the two together make a powerful combination." Would *StarCraft* have been as popular as it is if it weren't for battle.net? We doubt it.



[WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?]

So what do those letters spell? "BIT MILD ASS." Umm ... damn. We were hoping that it would spell something a little more profound. Maybe developers shouldn't take the elements of these games that we've highlighted or they'll come up with games that bite ass — but in a mild way, of course. Anyway, the realtime strategy genre definitely looks like it's headed for bigger and better things, as long as these designers remember it's supposed to be about fun and not how many features you can pack into your game or how complex you can make it. We don't want a RTS game with eight different races each with 200 units. Just give us a game that's easy to pick up and play but also has lots of depth to keep us coming back, and we'll be happy to oblige.

As for the originality factor, although only four of the 13 games in this story are "original" titles (the rest are sequels), there's still plenty of innovation going on. We said that the genre's been around for a while — well it has, but when you compare it to say, flight sims, it's definitely the new kid. Heck, the granddaddy of 'em all, *Dune 2*, was released only five years ago. The base concept — realtime action/strategy on a large scale, is a solid foundation for a lot of good ideas. So it's still learning how to walk. Just wait til it really starts to get going, like the first-person shooter genre is right now, and it's safe to say we'll all be pretty amazed.

[WHAT THEY'RE SAYING]

We asked developers for their takes on the RTS genre.

Is there anything that RTS games have so far lacked?

BRUCE SHELLEY, ENSEMBLE→ "We're looking at encouraging cooperative play, working together for some goal other than just the destruction of the other player. Something Sid Meier brought up was that we have to change the way gamers currently play — rather than slam each other, to team up against a common enemy. All other RTS games are conquest dominated. AoE had multiple victory conditions and I think that was part of its success."

BRETT SPERRY, WESTWOOD→ "Up until now, the atmosphere and environment of RTS games have been fairly static. We hope to change that with *Tiberian Sun*. For example, players will have to account for lakes and rivers that freeze, forest fires, winds that can carry poisonous gas, and ion storms that will cripple high-tech weapons. It's a much more dangerous — and therefore interesting — world to wage war in."

JOSH RESNICK, PAN-DEMIC→ "Getting immersed in the conflict and having a grittier feel to the war is something that's missing in most RTS games. In *Battlezone 2* we're pushing that aspect from the position of being in the front line of combat, *Dark Reign 2* still has that godlike position, but we're going to be putting you closer to the troops."

Will it be technology that drives the future of the genre, or are there unexplored gameplay avenues?

BRETT SPERRY→ "Gameplay is always paramount. New technology should only be used when it truly improves gameplay and creates a deeper experience for the player. Only good gameplay will keep the genre alive and growing, ultimately. We're touching on some new ideas in *Tiberian Sun* with a more dynamic and context-sensitive battlefield, nonlinear mission trees, and a broad array of new tactics and units, to name a few."

ROB PARDO, BLIZZARD→ "We believe that, regardless of genre, compelling gameplay is the most important component to creating a fun, addictive playing experience. Gamers obviously want games that take advantage of the latest technology, but for most, gameplay supercedes all other factors. If a game maximizes all the latest and greatest in technology, but fails to deliver on the game side, then the product ends up disappointing customers."

CLAYTON KAUZLARIC, CAVE DOG→ "Technology is the game. The game is a big heap of tech with art draped all over it. Without tech you have nothing. On the other hand, you can have the technology, but is it fun? That's the question. You gotta get that balance between technology and also keeping

track of what's important — having fun. You can't get too caught up in nerdy tech stuff that no one but yourself's gonna be interested in."

BRUCE SHELLEY→ "I'm not sure that technology will have such a big effect. 3D is certainly the big thing right now. It will allow more environments, but with 3D you lose the crisp graphic look that we grabbed with AoE. I don't see that far out in the future to tell what technology will do to the RTS. The first team that makes a significant step forward will get a big rush and we'll all go forward after them."

What features that we haven't seen before would you suspect are likely to be heading the feature set list for RTS games released in 2000?

CHRIS TAYLOR, GAS POWERED GAMES→ "For lack of a better word I would call it 'macro-management.' It's the opposite of micro-management. It's where the player is in charge of the big picture. As the battles get bigger and bigger it will be necessary to automate the little things and give the player the big decisions. Of course, a good design will always allow the player to get into the trenches and micro-manage if he wants."

BRUCE SHELLEY→ "Larger multiplayer games are one area — up to 16 players. Games could also shrink in scale, like controlling a few guys in a *Saving Private*

Ryan-type idea. I think that there'll be a merging of ideas on a more cinematic scale — more immersive background voices and music, etc. that make it more a quantitative change of scale rather than a qualitative change. There'll be efforts to make you feel that you're in the game rather than playing it."

BRETT SPERRY→ "Online/communication technology as well as the competitive gameplay dynamic (two, four, or six or more players) is a very, very fertile area for new ideas. I'm sure we will see a few bold and innovative steps in this area. In the short term I wonder if RTS game makers will move away from adding features just for features' sake, which is becoming the current trend. I think *Dune 2*, *C&C*, and *Warcraft* greatly popularized the strategy genre because these games, while born of round-based strategy/wargames, took the genre a quantum leap forward thanks to simple mouse-driven interfacing and edge-of-your-seat accessible realtime gameplay. These games stripped away all the math equations, dozens of keyboard commands, cryptic rules, and unneeded complications. Over the last year, I've seen the recomplimenting of the genre. Players are starting to see lots of new features, menus, options, and controls. And, not surprisingly, most of the games moving in this direction didn't appeal or have long-term staying power." ➤

Rigor Motorist

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Answer: LAN party!

The movement toward organized on-site gatherings for gaming has really exploded lately, and with good reason. Just think of all the stuff an on-site LAN party can do for you: You get to have a good time. You're free to scarf as much junk food as your stomach lining will permit. You hook up with friends and get to blow the hell out of people you'd never met before they showed up on your doorstep, CPU and QII disc in hand. Best of all, YOU CONQUER LAG. No more glitch kills on your record; if someone takes you down, it really is because you sucked. At least for that moment.

"There's nothing like person-to-person play — it's so exciting, the most fun you can have. I love seeing the expression on people's faces when they've nailed a particularly good kill," says Jason "Wizbang" Delmar, who hosts the TALON Games parties in the San Francisco area. Of course, every day is a LAN party at PCXL, as we constantly hop on our LAN for any

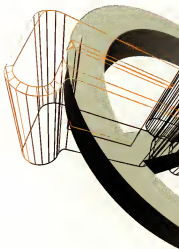
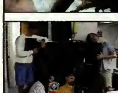
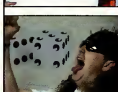
game we damn well please (and we get paid for this — tough job, but somebody has to do it).

It's not all that hard to do, either. Your guests are supplying the toughest parts — the computers, monitors, and network cards. If you have enough power outlets, a fast machine for a server, and an Ethernet hub, you pretty much have the bare essentials. There's even an IP numbering standard to let you fire up your gaming Intranet with a minimum of hassle; 192.0.2.x (yes, x is a number between 1 and 999, dummy) will ensure smooth connections between the various machines and your server.

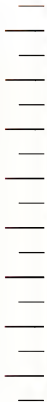
IT TAKES A NATION OF MILLIONS

For the guests, life is simple — you just cart your computer and monitor, hook up, pay whatever the going rate is (typically in the neighborhood of \$10, depending on the quality of eats and cost of location) to cover your share of space rental, food, and other costs. A successful host — as with any party — has a lot more to think about.

For starters, is there enough power? LAN parties outgrow your house pretty fast, both because of space reasons (how many people can you realistically cram into



partying



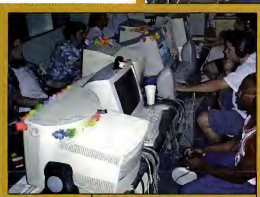
your living room?) and the power drain from a slew of computers and peripherals (like speakers). A LAN party can run anywhere from you and a couple of friends, to a 100-plus gathering at a rented convention hall or other big space. So, you need to find a space that'll hold however many people you're expecting and supply enough juice. Then you'll want one or more dedicated servers to host the games.

And there are the extras you'll want. "I keep a few extra network cards, and I'd have extra CPUs if I could manage it," says Seth "Looch" Cheffetz, host of the East Coast Massacre in Connecticut. "I had one guy who came up from New York once and found that he couldn't get his computer running; he ended up playing much of the time on mine while I was dealing with organizational stuff." Headsets are another must if you're having a no-speakers event — and that's not just for the noise issue either, as speakers reduce the power requirements for your host location.

Then there's the detail work. "You have to approach this like you would any party you have," says Dave "Fargo" Kosak, founder of lanparty.com and host of LAN parties in Southern California. (To PCXL that means invite girls, and guys will come even if you don't want them.) "You want to make sure people have what they need to have fun." Food, prizes, and even offbeat themes all figure into this, he says; he's done funny hats, holiday-themed events, and you know what Halloween brings, right?



Having a row of computers that stretches for miles certainly looks pretty cool, but just imagine trying to set up this nightmarish web of cords (above). Junk food is required, although Cheetos aren't recommended due to the sticky orange residue likely to be left everywhere.



Is all this too much hassle? "You know, I have more fun doing the organizing in some ways than I do playing," Looch says.

GROWING LIKE A WEED

On an unorganized basis, LAN parties are hardly a brand-new phenomenon, especially if you factor in office play. (I recall many a night spent at a magazine I used to work for, playing *Duke Nukem 3D* over GameLAN before it finally sprang for a decent Intranet.) But given that the network algorithms for action games are completely mature at this point, and on top of that, the Internet's continued inability to guarantee lag-free play, a dedicated network of gamers has devised a structure to communicate and set up killfests.

If you're looking for the do's, don'ts, hows, and wheres of LAN parties, www.lanparty.com should probably be your first stop. It's brought to you by the same folks who do PlanetQuake, and in a few short months, it's become a popu-

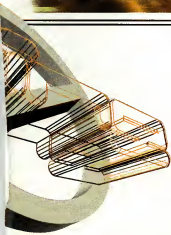


lar clearinghouse for nationwide LAN party information. Looking for an area gathering or planning to host one? Post it on lanparty.com. And if you find yourself at any time in the dark on any details, from setting up the network to the best ways to travel with your CPU, this is basically FAQ city.

You can also tap into the LAN Party Web Ring, set up by enthusiasts of the phenomenon, at www.bang.org/lanring/. This is more of a crashshoot, as each page exists on a regional basis, but they're your kind of people, and even somebody who's not around the corner from you may know someone else who's — and maybe even who's planning a party.



A LAN PARTY CAN RUN ANYWHERE FROM YOU AND A COUPLE OF FRIENDS, TO A 100-PLUS GATHERING AT A RENTED CONVENTION HALL.



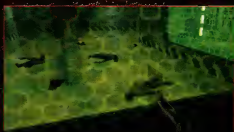


WINDOW'S 95



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First Party



PERFECT LAN PARTY



IF PCXL was the host ...

GAMES: QIL, Rainbow Six, Tribes, Unreal

FOOD: Chetos, Fritos, Oreos, Gorditos, Big Macos, HoHos, giant cake with Erica Eleniak hidden inside, 400 watermelons, gigantic vat of refried beans



DRINK: Microbrew beer, microbrew beer, cheap beer for when we don't care what the beer is, and a bottle of sherry for the ladies



LOCATION: Beach in Bali

ALTERNATE ENTERTAINMENT:

What? You need more than a beach in Bali with a vat of refried beans, beer by the gallon, and Erica Eleniak?



WHAT TO WEAR: Men—PCXL T-shirts and jeans, Erica Eleniak—nothing

LAN PARTY PICK-UP LINES:

"Since you're the only girl here, how about losing these geeks and checking out my ping?"

"Hey baby, wanna check out my connection?"

"Do you know a thief? Because someone stole the colored lighting out of Unreal and put it in your eyes"

"I can do plenty more than blind keys"

"You can crash my server any day"

OFFICIAL PSEUDO-RAP SONG IN BACKGROUND: You down with LPB, yeah you know me

This guy has the right idea, but apparently the salesperson at Costco mistakenly gave him soda instead of beer. This is a great way to ruin a perfectly good LAN party. We repeat: Beer is crucial!

► P. 35

THE IMPORTANT STUFF

Can't have a party without eating and drinking, right? So, what do you bring?

Junk food, of course. "We had 16 people at our last party, and we went through eight bags of Doritos, one and a half cases of Pepsi cans, plus a couple of bottles of other soda, and I had a barbecue going, too," says WIZbang. "No Jolt, though. Maybe we could use it for the long ones; people are craving anything when it gets late."

Besides that ... well, you know what your basic party foods are—chips, cheese anything, maybe some beef jerky for those long-haul fragfests. Healthy alternatives exist, of course, but somehow they don't seem to capture

the same essence of a successful LAN party. And, of course beer is essential to any party—just watch those games get sloppier as the night goes on. (We suggest real microbrew, but if you're on a budget you can pick up a 12er of Meister Brau real cheap and get just as trashed.)

Sadly, not every LAN party resembles a frat house, though. You'll find a lot of no-alcohol postings and are likely to stumble across more geeks than the first day of ComicCon.

Also, more and more parties are being held in rented spaces as their popularity and size continue to grow. That brings in the rules and expectations of the facility. The emphasis, though, is always on games anyway. "People have fun in general, but they're there to play," says WIZbang.

QUAKE SHAKES

As far as games, there's no question: *Quake* and *Quake II* rule the LAN party roost for now. The continuing preference for the original *Quake* stems from its speed advantages over its sequel, while *Unreal* still has too many multiplayer glitches to have fully caught on. *StarCraft* is gaining popularity, and other strategy games have their gatherings as people discover newer joys like Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six*. Occasionally, there's a party devoted to a legacy title like

LAN parties allow you to simultaneously hit an enemy with a paper plane and a rocket. In some circles this receives the highest of respect.



Talking trash isn't always kosher at LAN parties, but PCXL encourages this sort of activity at every possible moment.



Can this guy play his way out of a paper bag? Will his friend pass out, puke, or just continue to drool? What's up with the "zany" head wear? These are questions that can only be answered by actually attending a LAN party.





Working out prior to LAN parties can be crucial when the blue-haired dancing girls come by for a little LAN luv.

Doom. And at many parties, there are no real restrictions. "We play anything that someone brings," says Looch, "but eventually everything gets back to Quake."

Newbies generally need not fear the reaper, as LAN parties are also in many cases a response to more serious tournament-level gatherings. Looch came up with the Middletown Massacre, the predecessor to the current East Coast Massacre, after trips to The Fray and TC Con. "They were a lot of fun, but once you're eliminated, there's



"There is nothing more to see here. Please disperse from the area!" Apparently bullthorns, militant factions, and shots are very common.



not really much to do," he says. Another alternative is to split things up — one server dedicated to the more serious players and another one for people just looking to have some fun.

Similarly, if you're thinking prizes, be aware — the bigger the prize, the more cutthroat the competition. "Our big prize is a bag of chips," Fargo wryly notes. "That way people aren't playing for anything more than fun."

The regional aspect doesn't deter people from traveling some serious distances for LAN parties. "I'm planning a Halloween party that two people are planning to come down to from Canada," says WiZbang.

"I know a couple of Australians who flew to one of our parties in Southern California once," says Fargo. "They work for a company called TeamFortress Software, which is creating the multiplayer expansion for Valve's *Half-Life* in Seattle. They just flew down to party. At one point during the LAN party they left for a few hours to go check out Disneyland."

"THINGS CAN GET PRETTY FUNKY AFTER PEOPLE HAVE BEEN PLAYING FOR SEVERAL HOURS." BRING YOUR AIR FRESHENER, FOLKS.



Any LAN party that can combine ping-pong gaming and cute girls who like to stick out their tongues is an instant success.

get some weird people sometimes. (Hey, that may even be you.) That's one good reason to consider observing a rule of LAN party etiquette — avoid trash talking. "We don't have much," says Fargo.

"People don't know each other well enough, I guess."

Then again, why be inhibited? "We have tons of trash talking," laughs WiZbang.

There are also the other aspects that arise when you cram a bunch of sweaty guys into a small space. "We have all-weekend parties sometimes, and people stay over, either here or at a hotel," Fargo says. "Things can get pretty funky after people have been playing for several hours." Bring your air freshener, folks.

That's not so bad to put up with, though. Pretty much, LAN parties are yours to create as you want, or to visit with a mix of good manners and bloodthirstiness. And never forget the truly important thing: YOU CONQUER LAG.

STRANINGS

There can be oddities at LAN parties. "Our guy Houston, who does the day-to-day stuff on lanparty.com, likes to bring animals to the parties," Fargo says. "Last time, he had some ferrets and a hedgehog." What the hell they do is anyone's guess.

Also, although it's a great chance to meet new people who are into exactly the same games you love, there's no guarantee that you're going to like everyone at a LAN party. Public events can



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S3 Savage3D

Will this chipset bring S3 back from the Virge of Oblivion?

You might have owned one. It may have been the first "3D" card you ever owned. You dropped it into your unsuspecting PC, yanked out your old Trident card, loaded up the special version of *Descent* that came with it, and breathlessly awaited blazing speed and graphical splendor. And you watched in horror as one of your favorite games started up, gushing with bright new textures, and crawled along at an unplayable, but very pretty, five frames per second.

It's unfortunate that the vast majority of us wide-eyed gamers got our first taste of 3D acceleration soured by the S3 Virge, which just might be the most overhyped, overbought 3D chipset in history. Its various incarnations (DX, GX, OX, or whatever), on boards like Diamond's Stealth 3000 and Hercules' Terminator 3D permanently attached onto the unfortunate

motherboards of Packard Bell, Compaq, and other all-in-one PCs, found their way into millions of business and household computers. It quickly lost the faith of the gaming community, however, and was forever branded a 3D decelerator.

S3 is back and trying to claw its way into the good graces of gamers, with a brand-new, non-Virge-based chipset called Savage3D. And it will take a lot to wipe away the memory of Virge.

The new chip's early benchmark scores are quite promising; it's up there with the Riva TNT and the Voodoo Banshee, and it nears the lofty Voodoo 2 neighborhood. What's more, S3 claims the Savage3D is capable of near-AGP 4X performance, and the price of Savage3D products should be in the modest range that made the Virge cards so tempting, but not quite as low as Matrox G200 and Rendition parts.

With the Virge still fresh on our minds, it's hard not to be a bit gun shy when it comes to new technology from S3. Indeed, there are a few relevant questions about just how S3 achieves the high performance.

A major part of that is through hardware support of texture compression. Microsoft went so far as to license S3TC, the texture compression scheme that S3 is heavily flaunting as the "industry standard." If specifically supported, texture compression can be an asset to developers, but if it's implemented for every game, it may result in undesired effects.

Early Savage3D silicon looks great; with luck, S3 will finally be able to rebuild its reputation and turn the stale Virge aftertaste into nothing more than a bad memory. Look for the first Savage3D products to hit the shelves as you read this, with more trickling out through the end of this year. ➤

GETTING SAVAGE

Look for Savage 3D-based graphics and other products from the following companies:

➔ HERCULES

The first to announce a Savage3D-based product, Hercules is going to enter the S3-dominated Terminator line with the Hercules Terminator 3D, which may be the highest name tag a video card in history. The card should be available by the time you read this.

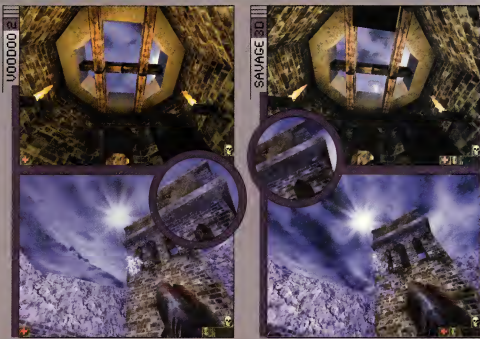
➔ STB

The Nitro 3D was STB's unfortunate Virge-based entry, but now the firm gets a fresh start with the Savage3D-powered Nitro 3300. Pricing and availability have yet to be announced.

➔ DIAMOND MULTIMEDIA

Since Canopus hasn't announced a Savage3D board, look for Diamond's to be the most anticipated of the lot. Its unnamed Diamond Savage3D part is planned to be shipped around the holidays.

SAVAGE3D IMAGE QUALITY



While the S3TC compression method enables vast amounts of texture details to be compressed into small files, few developers are using it right now. Above we show the difference between standard Voodoo 2 textures and those rendered with the Savage3D. Notice the difference in clarity for these individual *Descent* scenes.

S3TC:

TELL ME WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

Compression is a method of taking large amounts of data and reducing them to a more manageable size, with the hopes of keeping everything intact. Compression schemes can be as general or as specific as an application requires; for instance, WinZip and Drivespace try to compress virtually every file they encounter, while S3's texture compression method, called S3TC, is specifically for 3D textures.

Three factors affect the success of a data compression scheme. One is the compression ratio, which usually appears as $x:1$, with x representing just how much data, after compression, you can fit in the amount of space used before compression. The second factor is data loss. In crunching a sizable chunk of data into a small space, there is always the chance that, when decompressed, the data doesn't come out intact. Finally, there's the chance of a performance hit. It takes time to compress and then decompress data, rather than just transfer it intact.

S3 claims that S3TC is capable of a 6:1 compression ratio; developers can cram six times as much texture detail into the same amount of uncompressed space. How well game developers will use it, and whether it will detract from texture quality and game performance, remains to be seen (but its inclusion in the mass-consumed DX6 suggests that it's heading in the right direction).

Nvidia Riva TNT

Riva, rival Andele! The fastest chipset of the last generation just got an update, and it's speedy

PRICE → \$199
CHIPSET → Riva TNT
CARD TYPE → AGP 2X or PCI, 16MB RAM
API SUPPORT → DirectX
BUNDLE → Varies depending on OEM

Love it or hate it, Nvidia's troubled Riva 128 had its share of flaws. Sure, it churned out the best Direct3D scores of the first generation of chipsets, but it cheated on visual quality to get those scores. Fixing that, Nvidia's Riva TNT may be the most anticipated 3D chipset since Voodoo 2, and it looks like it's going to live up to its prerelease reputation.

Bear in mind, the card we were playing with is an AGP 2X reference design with early drivers; the final product can only get better, but that's hard to believe. The Riva TNT cranked out the highest D3D scores we've ever seen, and its *Quake II* framerates were just below those on a Voodoo 2 card. Most chipsets can attribute high framerates to *Quake II*'s multitexturing, but the TNT can actually crunch two pixels per clock cycle; it's the first single-chip card to accomplish that feat.

The big question is: How the heck is the visual quality? We traipsed through all of our games looking for transparent textures; we got right up close to walls, doors, and floors. Admittedly, we looked at the TNT's visuals more closely than usual — once bitten, twice pissed off.

Thankfully, Nvidia looked from past mistakes. The TNT learns as good as any current chipset,

TNT IMAGE QUALITY



In this succession of shots, the differences between the image quality of the Riva TNT and the Voodoo 2 become more apparent. The TNT is worlds beyond the grainy quality of Riva's previous card, the 128. Even with the slightly better image quality, the TNT can run *Quake* at almost Voodoo 2 framerates and run *D3D* games at framerates that are even faster.

including such applauded parts as the Matrox G200 and the Intel 1740. Gone are the blotchy transparencies and the missing distant objects, and even when you get up close to textures, there's no sign of the banding or dithering associated with the Riva 128 chips.

The only problem we encountered with the TNT reference board, save for its early drivers, is a vast amount of heat generated by its processor. Cooled only by a fanless heat sink, the chip got hot

enough to cook a roast. There's talk of a possible clock speed reduction, which may adversely affect benchmarks, but it should keep the chip a little cooler.

TNT product pricing should be fairly competitive; the STB Velocity 4400 should retail at around \$200, which beats out most Voodoo 2 parts but puts it higher than the slightly inferior Matrox Mystique G200. Nvidia has truly outdone itself — and maybe everyone else — with the Riva TNT.

TNT OEM ASAP

The TNT is blowing up all over the place. Here's who's making them:

→ STB VELOCITY 4400

First to market, the new Velocity is available right now. The 16MB cards are available in both PCI and AGP flavors, both retailing for pennies under \$200.

→ DIAMOND VIPER V550

Following up the Riva 128-based Viper V330 will be Diamond Multimedia's new TNT-based V550. It's in stores now, priced around \$200.

→ CANOPUS SPECTRA 2500

This could very well be the Cadillac, or maybe even the Lexus, of Riva TNT boards. Canopus never fails to go above and beyond the call of duty, so keep an eye out for the Spectra. Retail will again be in the \$200 bracket.

EXPLOSIVE

If our 16MB Riva TNT reference board is any indication of how final product will turn out, go buy one. The test machine: A PII 300 running on a 100MHz 440BX motherboard with 64MB 30ns 50RAM running Win95 OSR2 B build 111, and DirectX 6.0.

RIVA TNT →

	800 x 600 x 16	1024 x 768 x 16
Forsaken	85.9	67.2
Incoming	54.6	38.3
Turok	71.5	N/A
Quake II	45.3	33.0

All numbers represent frames per second.

JARGONATOR

Having trouble slogging through this mire of tech talk? You're not alone. Even the edit staff gets mup mapping mixed up with trilinear filtering once in a while.

API: Short for Application Program Interface, an API is a set of files that tells an operating system how to talk to the hardware. A programmer needs only to program to an API to ensure that his program is compatible with hardware designed for that API. Before APIs, programmers had to build in individual support for every bit of hardware they expected their programs to encounter.

DIRECT3D: Part of Microsoft's DirectX API suite, Direct3D is gradually becoming the most-supported 3D graphics API. Every 3D accelerator supports Direct3D.

TEXTURE COMPRESSION: Compression of texture information in off-screen memory, allowing more detailed bitmaps and textures to be used.

MULTITEXTURING: Often used for lighting effects or other special effects, this 3D acceleration technique involves pasting two textures on one surface. Oone through hardware, multitexturing can require two clock cycles to accomplish, but Voodoo 2 and Riva TNT chipsets can do it in one.

MIP MAPPING: In real life, the farther you stand from an object the less detail you can make out. In the spirit of that well-known fact, mip mapping involves using different versions of each texture appearing in a game. As you get closer to an object, its texture is swapped with a more detailed version. This has two desirable effects: it prevents textures from looking chunky when you get up close to them, and speeds up the rendering by reducing the detail of distant objects.

OPENGL ICD DR "MINI-DRIVER": OpenGL is a robust 3D API, intended more for high-level design and CAD drawing than gaming. Since games such as *Quake* don't use all of its features, graphics card designers write limited drivers, called "mini-drivers," or ICDs (installable client drivers), especially for gaming.

OPENGL GWH OR "MINNIE DRIVER": A special 3D API originally used for the film *God Will Hunting*. Fluctuation in weightiness of Minnie Driver has yet to be completely figured out.

RATING 8

+ Pluses

- Much better image quality than the Riva 128
- Blistering D3D framerates

- Minuses

- The chipset tends to generate a great deal of heat



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Get the most out of your computer

Of all the questions that we get here, the most common involves upgrading your system (besides of course the questions about quantum squirrel buffering). Upgrades depend greatly upon the type of system you have, and the best way to answer all these questions is to answer them all at once. Your system will fall in between the ones we've listed here, so you can determine exactly what you need to make your computer fly.

APPLE II+



STANDARD RAM: 48K
MUST-HAVE ADD-ON: Joystick from CH Products
MUST-HAVE GAMES: *Bond's Tale, Zork, and Dr. J vs. Lorry Bird: One on One*
BEST VIDEO CARD: Bo-column card/lower case upgrade from Applied Engineering
BEST SOUND: Buy a stereo and turn it up loud
WHAT TO DO: Best bet is to trade it in for a pocket calculator
CELEBRITY EQUIVALENT: Phyllis Diller

OCCUPATION: Amateur historian
SALARY: You're living in your mother's basement
CAR EQUIVALENT: Edsel



486 DX33



STANDARD RAM: 4MB
MUST-HAVE ADD-ON: External modem
MUST-HAVE GAMES: *Doom, Wolfenstein, Syndicate*
BEST VIDEO CARD: VGA graphics card (256 colors, oohh)
BEST SOUND: Sound Blaster 16
WHAT TO DO: Add wings maybe, nothing else is going to make much of a difference
CELEBRITY EQUIVALENT: Bea Arthur

OCCUPATION: Mowing lawns
SALARY: Minimum wage and all the RC Cola you can drink
CAR EQUIVALENT: AMC Pacer



PENTIUM 90



STANDARD RAM: 8MB
MUST-HAVE ADD-ON: SideWinder joystick
MUST-HAVE GAMES: *Magic Carpet, Warcraft II, Command & Conquer*
BEST VIDEO CARD: Voodoo 1 Card
BEST SOUND: Sound Blaster Pro
WHAT TO DO: Getting a new video card and at least 16MB RAM is a good start, but for hardcore gaming it's time for a new system. With P200s dropping below \$500 in many locations, now's when you make the jump
CELEBRITY EQUIVALENT: Jane Seymour

OCCUPATION: Mail-room guy
SALARY: Enough for a flat and all the Cheetos you can eat
CAR EQUIVALENT: Dodge Diplomat



PENTIUM 166 MMX



STANDARD RAM: 16MB
MUST-HAVE ADD-ON: Force-feedback joystick
MUST-HAVE GAMES: *TIE Fighter, Quake, Duke Nukem 3D*
BEST VIDEO CARD: Voodoo 1 card (Voodoo 2 doesn't really offer many performance enhancements until the next level)
BEST SOUND: Creative Live or A3D sound system
WHAT TO DO: Get a good 2D/3D card, and upgrade to a minimum of 32MB RAM for top performance
CELEBRITY EQUIVALENT: Jacqueline Bisset

OCCUPATION: Average blue-collar job
SALARY: You can afford MCD, but can't kick the Ham's habit
CAR EQUIVALENT: Ford Escort



I-MAC



STANDARD RAM: 32MB
MUST-HAVE ADD-ON: Beret, cups of coffee, and a zine
MUST-HAVE GAMES: Plenty of great games are just around the corner ... yeah, right
BEST VIDEO CARD: Don't bother, software can run on any Mac
BEST SOUND: Forget sound, try getting a floppy drive first
WHAT TO DO: Trade it in for a decent PC
CELEBRITY EQUIVALENT: Alanis Morissette

OCCUPATION: Somewhat smelly poet
SALARY: Money is just the tool of The Man
CAR EQUIVALENT: The New Volkswagen Beetle



PENTIUM II 233



STANDARD RAM: 32MB
MUST-HAVE ADD-ON: Wicked Vision 3D glasses
MUST-HAVE GAMES: *Jedi Knight, Quake II, NHL 98*
BEST VIDEO CARD: Matrox's G200 or Riva's TNT boards offer fast acceleration for single-card solutions. But Voodoo 2 is still the best bet because you may want to upgrade to an SLI setup
BEST SOUND: Creative Live or A3D sound system with two good speakers and a decent woofer
WHAT TO DO: If you have a Voodoo 2, get another for SLI. If not, make sure you at least have a decent 3D card and 64MB RAM
CELEBRITY EQUIVALENT: Christa Miller (Kate from "The Drew Carey Show")

OCCUPATION: Young up-and-comer
SALARY: Just enough to get into serious credit trouble
CAR EQUIVALENT: Honda Accord



PENTIUM II 400



STANDARD RAM: 64MB
MUST-HAVE ADD-ON: Flat-screen monitor
MUST-HAVE GAMES: *Unreal, Half-Life, Rainbow Six*
BEST VIDEO CARD: A Voodoo 2 SLI setup is a must
BEST SOUND: Creative Live or A3D sound system and some big speakers or you'll be missing out on some great sound
WHAT TO DO: Don't screw around too much with this system yet. If you're playing the Win98 game, USB port peripherals are going to start being useful. Check out the new Microsoft D550 digital speaker set
CELEBRITY EQUIVALENT: Jennifer Aniston

OCCUPATION: Executive (or spoiled game journalist)
SALARY: Bringing in the big bucks
CAR EQUIVALENT: Porsche Boxster



PENTIUM II 1000



STANDARD RAM: 256MB
MUST-HAVE ADD-ON: Microsoft's Gettin'it onator:
 Heather Locklear edition
MUST-HAVE GAMES: *Quake IV, Rainbow Seven, More Unreal*
BEST VIDEO CARD: Tri-Voodoo 3 SLI configuration
BEST SOUND: Full THX theater sound
WHAT TO DO: Spend the extra bucks for the holographic projection monitor
CELEBRITY EQUIVALENT: Pamela Anderson

OCCUPATION: Astronaut (or celebrity lawyer)
SALARY: \$5,000,000 per year just from commercials
CAR EQUIVALENT: McLaren F1



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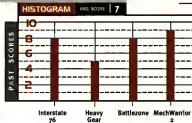
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EIDOS
INTERACTIVE



DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Interstate 82

I76 moves over to the Dark Side

Ah, the '80s. Jheri curls and Reagan. Flock of Seagulls and acid wash jeans. They ruled. I was there, and they ruled. Honest. And if Zach Norman, designer and writer of I76, could make the '70s as cool as he did, I

won't argue against the '80s getting a fond retro glance with the sequel.

Norman can be forgiven for being wary of the press. In a recent online interview, confusion arose over the appearance in I82 of Jade, the polygonal babe who bites it in I76's intro. Her appearance in I82

is part of a dream scene which, Norman explains, "uses her character as a metaphor for the strength of the vigilantes; she's a strong female character but — clichés aside — because the cars are the focus she can fight equally alongside the men." Metaphors? In computer games? Deep, man.

What's actually going on is that the characters from I76 have matured over the last six years, but the issues of the universe remain the same. And while Skeeter has disappeared (along with his clumsy car customization interface, replaced with a more simple "salvage money" total that is then used to buy add-ons), Groove and Taurus are back in command, this time sporting the Jheri curl in place of the 'fro. For plot, a pretty straightforward kidnapping leads to the discovery of, no, a conspiracy that, shock, involves arms trades and, horror, leads all the way to the White



I'm popping a cap in the next mo'fo who calls me El DeBarge.



When the action gets to be too much, head to Make Out Point and chill, man.

House (where we presume Reagan is taking a nap).

That's the backdrop for an all-new engine — Dark Side — and plenty of fresh options to the gameplay mechanics. Dark Side is being developed as a 3D hardware-only engine and will also be powering Activision's latest mech (gear) game, *Heavy Gear 2*. It's a situation that has allowed the programmers in I82's team of 18 to work together to a certain degree on creating the ideal engine. For example, one of the I82 programmers came up with and worked on the concept for shadowing effects. The H62 team needed it quicker so took his code, tweaked it, adjusted it, speeded it up, and got it running to their liking and then gave it back.

For I82, the programming crew has created its own animation and physics model, the latter being a pretty key component to making the car combat fun. The 40 different '80s cars (including hotrods, wood-paneled station wagons, busses, and trucks) will all be acting realistically in startling new terrain including a backdrop of the 1982 Las Vegas strip. The most interesting additions, however, are the inside locations. Sewers and an abandoned mine- ▶ p. 52

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Activision
PUBLISHER → Activision
RELEASE DATE → February '99
3D SUPPORT → DirectX3D, APIs TBA

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

The car combat gets upgraded for an '80s nostalgia blast. A new engine makes it a genuine sequel.

THE HURDLE

I76's fan base, while dedicated, was also relatively small. Does a car combat-retro mix have true mass appeal?

THE HIT

Simply, I76 was cool, and fun. The new Dark Side engine boasts powerful features and plenty of flexibility.



How many times did you wish for a rocket on a station wagon?



The dusty roads of *I76* are still here, but now you get to lose the dust.



New effects bring the '80s into the late '90s with stylish graphics effects.





INTERSTATE 82 GALLERY



All new environment effects are fine, but when you choose to fly through the air, it's all so much more awesome.





FIVE QUESTIONS

SINCE WE TALKED TO HIM ABOUT THE GAME, ZACK NORMAN WAS UTTERLY BOUND TO FACE THE INFAMOUS FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: What lengths did you go to to research the '80s?

A: I'm really into '80s culture. I grew up then, so I had the edge there. There were trips to the library and my own music collection. But the more I read the more I realized what an absurd time it was.

Q: Why '82 and not, say, '83?

A: It was about the music. It was cooler in the very early '80s, still influenced by punk; New Age was starting off. There were bands like Killing Joke, Kim Wilde, Duran Duran's first album, Gang of Four, Gary Numan's *Cars*, Soft Cell, Police, Devo, Thomas Dolby, Bowie (*Ashe's* to *Ashe's*). It wasn't just Van Halen.

Q: Who on the team most resembles 1982-style Don Johnson?

A: Gary Burnett, texture artist, comes in every day in a teal linen suit, a salmon-colored T-shirt underneath, and a skinny tie with piano keys.

Q: What's on the office CD player during development?

A: That would be Gary Numan's *Cars*.

Q: Where were you in 1982?

A: I was 12 and went to see The Police in concert at Hollywood Park horse race track. I wore 14-hole Doc Martens, tear sheet pants, and a Stray Cats T-shirt (I still have Docs).

► P. 49 shaft will present a whole different feel.

Another significant change is the ability to get the hell out of your car if it's about to go up in smoke (an ejector seat has been added as an extra to aid the emergency exit, should it be necessary). Outside of the vehicle you'll be armed, but at a massive disadvantage in combat. No shit. But if you see an opponent hop out of a car (say, to open a gate to let him drive through), if you're quick you can jump in his car and burn off (laughing hysterically on the way,



Sleazy '70s locales are replaced with sleazy '80s areas.



Next time some snot-nosed kid flips you off, here's what you should do — assuming you have a rocket launcher mounted on your car.

unless the anti-theft option has been primed).

Multiplay was a cornerstone of 176's continuing success, a fact not lost on Norman and his crew. Guilds, gangs, discussion groups, and a host of fan-based web pages keep the game alive. "Ruthless," asserts Norman of the fans. "I find them in the bushes outside my house."

Between discussion boards and pure flaming of the design team, certain user concepts have been included. For example, the production team initially shelved the idea of including pedestrians, but the clamor from the fans saw it get brought back to life.

The frailties of 176's multiplayer experience are being addressed with a more hack-resistant architecture. While custom paint jobs can be imported, you'll need some serious programming know-how and Softimage to get seriously hacking. Norman accepts that hacks will still happen, but an option in the server model allows games to be password protected so you can ensure cheaters stay out.

Multipayer gameplay won't be restricted to straight deathmatch. Capture-the-flag is joined by Hot Potato, in which one car has a mythical bomb and must bump into another and pass the bomb on before it explodes. A kill is scored only when the person dies, not when the car is trashed, so running for your life is kinda key, while hunting down pedestrians can score quick points. These variations in gameplay will lead to different

cars being built to suit the conditions. Even deathmating will require tweaks between the muscle and power required for outdoor levels and the maneuverability needed indoors. A weight class can also be selected to ensure that all vehicles are in the same ballpark.

182 features all-new higher-quality cut scenes (complete with animated eyes and mouths). "It's not an artistic experiment now," explains Norman. "It was in 176 and now we're wanting to hit big and we aim to sell to the mainstream user base."

There's a definite story to tell, and Norman's background in movie storytelling is pointing him toward a linear path. "I don't believe in an interactive story," he asserts. "It's hard enough to create one linear experience that's emotionally fulfilling. Videogames fail here because they're trying to



What the ... the darndest things happened in the '80s.

1982 FLASHBACK



ET, SPIELBERG HITS WEEPY GOLO
EVERYONE YELLS—→ "Phone home" MEMORABLE MOMENT—→ Tying up the vicious alien predator, stabbing him with drugs, and throwing him in the zoo. That is what happened, right? We didn't see the movie.

ARGENTINA INVADERS
FALKLAND ISLANDS
EVERYONE IN UK YELLS—→ "Where's it?" MEMORABLE MOMENT—→ Tabloid newspaper headline "Gotcha" when General Belgrano is sunk outside the exclusion zone, killing over 800 Argies

TAINTED LOVE
SOFT CELL HAS ITS ONE HIT
EVERYONE YELLS—→ "He did what?" MEMORABLE MOMENT—→ Debating whether the stories surrounding Marc Almond's alleged practices were possible. Urban legend is born

IBM PC DEBUTING IN 1981
THE PC GETS ITS FIRST BIG COVERAGE
EVERYONE YELLS—→ "It won't replace the typewriter/psn/calculator/board games/etc" MEMORABLE MOMENT—→ Time magazine, being the forward-thinking organ it is, awards the IBM PC the coveted title of "Man of the Year"

be interactive. My view is to make the story cool, have good characters, and have one way through, with that one way done right." Amen to that, but "emotionally fulfilling" videogames? In an '80s setting? He's got his work cut out, but for a car combat action-blast, what's done so far looks remarkably, er, fulfilling.

— ROB SMITH has never found a videogame emotionally fulfilling. Except perhaps for Legend of Zelda on Game Boy.



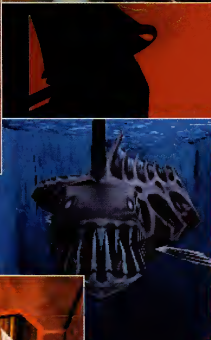


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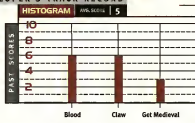
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Shogo: Mobile Armor Division

It's got an appetite for destruction — and sushi

I'll bet that anime is familiar to a fair number of our readers — the art of Japanese animation has a visual style and kinetic quality that is pretty influential, and getting more popular all the time. So you'd think it would make a good style to base a

first-person shooter around. Well, Monolith sure thinks so, and from what we can see, it's definitely onto something. The company's upcoming shooter *Shogo* is fast, destructive, and has exceedingly satisfying and eye-candified explosions. Just crank up that bullgut

multiple rocket launcher on a pack of enemy tanks ... but I'm getting ahead of myself now.

A main draw is the game's two modes of gameplay: Your character is either in a 40-foot tall MCA (Mobile Combat Armor) going on a giant robot rampage, or on foot,

sneaking around but still blowing up stuff. "We think that balance between these two gameplay experiences should offer a lot of variation for all gamers," offers Product Manager John Jack. When you're in an MCA, don't expect a lumbering slow beast. These ▶



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Monolith
PUBLISHER → Monolith
RELEASE DATE → Q4 '98
3D SUPPORT → DirectX3, DirectX 6

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

New engine, new attitude, old-school gameplay. (Hey, Monolith, I'll sell you that slogan if you wanna use it.)

THE HURDLE

Hefty system reqs to run at speed, and with a new engine comes a whole new set of potential problems.

THE HIT

Some good buzz about this title. Weapons are particularly ass-kicking — it just feels like a well-tuned game.

More than 40 single-player levels will switch between MCA and on-foot modes. One thing that never changes is that you shoot the hell out of everything that dares cross your path.



Giant robots, splattering blood, and guided missiles are a good start for any game.

FIVE QUESTIONS

JOHN JACK, PRODUCT MANAGER OF *SHOGO* AND A MAN WITH TWO FIRST NAMES, GETS GRILLED LIKE AHI TUNA.

Q: You did some pretty interesting things with storytelling in the engine. Why do you think more people don't try stuff like that?

A: They will be now. Games like *Half-Life* and *Sin* that are more concentrated on the story and game rather than just features have scripted scenes and evolve a storyline through the game. We had a great plot from the start, so it was rather easy to find ways to unfold it during the game.

Q: What kind of anime do you guys watch?

A: Macross Plus, Akira, Patlabor, Evangelion... way too many to mention.

Q: What would be the coolest thing about owning an MCA in real life?

A: Pulling up to McDonald's in one and taking out the drive-through clerk when he gets the order wrong.

Q: What are a few of your favorite weapons in the game?

A: On foot, the assault rifle (the #5 gun) and the dual colts are awesome. For the mecha, the bullgut (the #5 gun, fires four missiles that curl around) and the juggernaut (the #7 gun, fast-firing artillery shell) have to be best weapons to fire, even if there aren't any targets! Really, all of the weapons are great, and that's one of *Shogo's* biggest strengths: kick-ass weapons!

Q: Who would win in a battle of the late-night sidekicks?

A: Easily Kevin Eubanks. That man's arms are huge!



My name is MCA / I've got a license to kill / Now you know what the time is / It's time to get ill.



See that mechanical-looking thing over there? It's about to get blown into a gazillion metal shards by a swarm of rockets. Cool, huh?

► giant robots are comparably more agile and faster than humans, so you'll still be able to circle strafe, jump, and crouch to your heart's content. "Our mecha move, react, and fight like humans, only at five times the scale and with 100 times the power," says Jack.

Weapons are also presented with an anime mindset, and are appropriately flashy as well as hard-hitting. With two arsenals of nine weapons each, multiple variations of rocket launchers and energy weapons make up the arsenal for the MCAs, and more traditional weaponry such as assault rifles and shotguns make up the on-foot instruments of destruction.

And all this runs under LithTech, a brand-new engine developed in house. "The LithTech engine rivals any other engine out there in terms of rendering features and performance," says Jack. "LithTech allows us to create a



more realistic and interactive world. Different bullet holes on different surface types; shadows; weapons in hands; blood sprayed on walls, floors, and ceilings; and much, much more. We've also got full DX6 support [the result of close collaboration with Microsoft] — it works with a huge number of cards and runs very fast."

LithTech is also well tuned for multiplayer, Jack claims. Hardcore DMers all, the *Shogo* team made solid net play a priority. "We play a lot of DM. We are working to get the best version out when the game ships, but plan for full support after its release. We have DM-only maps and some of the single-player levels were converted to better suit DM. Since CTF and other mods can be easily released on the web after the product is out, we plan to finish single player and core DM first. Since the engine was always designed for multiplayer, it should be some minor tweaks and fixes rather than rewriting the full engine."

With an immersive and challenging single-player mode, and what promises to be solid, fast-paced deathmatch, Monolith looks like it avoided the "style over substance" trap — it has a winner on its hands. The novelty of a new engine will draw in a lot of hardcore first-person shooter fans, but there's easily something here for everybody. By the time you read this the game will be out, so if you're looking for an actual game to play, look no further.

— ED LEE is an anime fan, but what's with those eyes??

UNIQUELY JAPANESE

SUSHI

WHY IT'S UNIQUE → Come on, raw fish? And what else is in there?!

(Actually, we love sushi!)

WHAT YOU'RE MISSING → It's

extremely tasty. Yum

AMERICANIZED VERSION → It's now

"sushi" to eat sushi, so needless

posture now ruin the atmosphere in

any decent sushi bar

J-POP

WHY IT'S UNIQUE → One listen, and

you'll know — if you like, that is

WHAT YOU'RE MISSING → Nonsensical

lyrics and cheesy synthesizers =

greenies

AMERICANIZED VERSION → We

already went through this in the '80s

GIRLFRIEND SIMULATORS

WHY IT'S UNIQUE → Considered

prime entertainment for single men

WHAT YOU'RE MISSING → Animated

chicks are a healthier substitute for

real relationships

AMERICANIZED VERSION → Slow-up

dolls with plastic privates

YOSHI

WHY IT'S UNIQUE → It's a little

dragon (we think) that eats "happy

food" (which grows on "happy

trees")

WHAT YOU'RE MISSING → Yoshi's

Stony-kicked ass and was the precursor

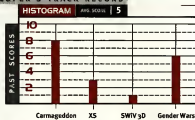
to Quake

AMERICANIZED VERSION → Barney



The variety in levels has you going indoors, outdoors, and into cities.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Carmageddon II

Glorified violence, vehicular manslaughter — yeah, we thought you'd like it

The sick and demented staff at Stainless Software first shocked the gaming world last June with the release of *Carmageddon*. Any game that can get officially stamped "immoral" by the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification), or anybody else for that matter, is our kind of game. But how do you top immoral? Much to our pleasure, the sequel has gone from immoral to verging on criminal.

The pedestrian polo of the original has escalated to disturbing new levels even we didn't dream of. More than 40 new polygonal pedestrians, including tramps, bimbos, lumberjacks, cops, bankers, and a Lara Croft clone among others, all innocently walk the streets just waiting to be racked up on your fender. The move from sprites to polygons has allowed for more dramatic animations, realistic collisions, and the ever-important decapitation. If you

ever tire of smashing civilians, there are plenty of animals (elephant, goat, penguin, and cats) that can be turned into road kill.

Still not enough destruction? OK, how about smashing up plate glass windows, running through craters, and destroying everything

in your path? You want more? All right then, how about smashing the hell out of your car? Bend it, snap it in half, smash the



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Stainless Software
PUBLISHER → Interplay
RELEASE DATE → December
3D SUPPORT → Direct3D, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

A brand-new engine displays even more gore than the original. New cars, tracks, and more shortcuts for endless variety.

THE HURDLE

Is *Carmageddon* a one-hit wonder? Can that same puerile enjoyment be captured with a sequel?

THE HIT

We had even more fun playing the demo than we had with the original game.



There just aren't many things better than the thud of a car meeting a pedestrian.

FIVE QUESTIONS

MAT SULLIVAN, DEVELOPMENT MANAGER AT STAINLESS SOFTWARE, STOPPED SMASHING THROUGH CROSSWALKS LONG ENOUGH TO ENLIGHTEN US ON FAGS, PEDESTRIAN POLO, AND CENSORSHIP.

Q: Have you ever actually run over somebody just for the fun of it?

A: It's funny you should ask, because only this morning I crushed my latest victim — an elderly woman with a small dog. She survived the initial onslaught and I was forced to drive over her a few more times.

Q: What do you have to say to the Moral Majority and others who blasted your game?

A: I doubt you would print what I would like to say [you'd be surprised], so instead I would like to encourage any moral watchdogs to play the game first before they decide to jump on the bandwagon. Most of the outraged comments I read were printed before the game was even on sale, so how could they form a reasoned decision? Most people who complain are bitter old bureaucrats who wouldn't know a good game if it bit them on the arse. Those are the same type of people who would censor the Internet, videos, and magazines. They must be stopped. [Agreed!]

Q: Translate: Get the fags out of the boot while I head to the bog for a whizz!

A: Here goes: "Fetch the cigarettes from the trunk of the car while I go to the toilet for a piss."

Q: Did you do motion capture for the splattering pedestrians?

A: Yes. Four of our best artists were sacrificed. It cost us a fortune in payments to their families.

Q: What game do you play the most in the office (besides your own)?

A: Quake II if I am in a hurry and Red Alert when there is more time. I tend to play single-player games at home, my latest being Gran Turismo (PlayStation), Commandos (PC), and Might and Magic VI (PC).



The tracks are much more detailed and interactive than those in any other racing game.

► windshield, lose a fender, and eventually blow it up completely.

Even if it just added gore we'd be impressed, but *Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now* does much, much more. The new graphics engine is far superior to the original and is looking as good as, if not better than, any driving game on the market. The 3D-accelerated graphics show off special effects like fogging and spraying blood in great detail. With 30 new tracks featuring 10 mission levels, 33 new cars, and all new interactive backgrounds, the game has plenty for the lonely gamer (single player). More importantly, the multiplayer aspect of *CII* has improved. The game will come with eight network tracks and all new deathmatch modes, including a new arena mode that makes for a whole heap of metal. Weapons like the pedestrian repulsificator (hey, we don't name 'em), flame thrower, and spiked metal ball allow additional methods to torture and maim.

I don't know why ramming helpless pedestrians brings such glee, but I do know that *Carmageddon II* is already miles better than the original (which was the #3 "Greatest Guy Game" ever). If you, like me, suffer from suppressed road rage, then this looks like it deserves a place at the top of the shopping list. ►

— MIKE SALMON *issues this warning: "I'll stay off the side-walk if you stay off my streets."*



WHAT WE WANT

Carmageddon II looks like a blast, but if *Stainless* can manage to get in these bonus levels, we're talking a guaranteed 10.

REBEL WITHOUT A PULSE

LEVEL CONCEPT→ As American cinema sees symbol James Dean, you are the ultimate bad boy. Take your sports car convertible up to unbelievable speeds and try to maneuver the same deadly curves on Highway 41 that took out Jimmy Dean.

FROM PRINCESS TO STREET PIZZA

LEVEL CONCEPT→ A princess, a movie star, and a really bad driver. You can right the wrongs of the beloved Grace Kelly by veering through quaint French villages getting extra points for hitting farm animals and removing articles of clothing.

FERRIS BUELLER'S DRIVE OVER


LEVEL CONCEPT→ You are Matthew Broderick, the sometimes witty, always short actor, and it's your turn to start knocking off pedestrians. The key to the game is hit, run, and cover up. A special two-player game allows a friend to take the role of girlfriend Sarah Jessica Parker, who basically sits in the passenger seat with a light outfit and screams when yet another innocent is smashed into the pavement.

DING-ING FOR A PICTURE

LEVEL CONCEPT→ You get loaded on cheap French wine, then take the wheel of a Mercedes. Now the chase is on as you must speed through tight tunnels evading the evil paparazzi. If you fail, the high school dropout gets glamorized as the woman of the century. Succeed and she lives as the black sheep of the English royal family.



Smashing through glass windows and driving through a mall full of yuppies is one major highlight in *CII*.



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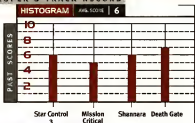
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SPEC OPS:
Rangers Lead the Way
PRO PACK

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Wheel of Time

The best-looking game on one wheel

How exactly do you jump from making only graphic adventures with — of all things — text parsers ("vomit in bucket"), to making a cutting-edge game running under the *Unreal* engine? Isn't that like Pat Boone going to heavy metal? Uh ... never mind.

Point-and-click maven Legend Entertainment is getting into the first-person 3D genre, and in a big way. At heart *Wheel of Time* is an action game, but with doses of strategy, role playing, and even — get this — storytelling (it's based on the popular, seemingly endless series of books by Robert Jordan). But does Legend know what it's getting into? I mean, this is the most competitive of all genres, and its audience is probably the pickiest of all gamers. It's all "frames this and ping times that" with them.

That doesn't seem to bother Glen Dahlgren, WoT's designer and producer. He definitely thinks his



I hate running into polygons in a dark alley, don't you?

game is ready for the big time, and the first thing he wants hardcore action junkies (you guys and gals reading this) to know is that it's not about to cut back on the visceral rush in favor of strategy or role-playing elements. "In my opin-

ion, it's simply the next logical step in the evolution of the first-person shooter genre," says Dahlgren. "It's my intention to tell a real story through character interaction, cut scenes, story events, and dynamic objectives."

Detailed strategic elements involve the construction of a castle,



populating it with traps and monsters, then battling it out with up to three other players, all with their own castles (possibly a *Dungeon Keeper* idea, above ground). Dahlgren assures us that this won't be as complicated as it may first sound, as a comprehensive citadel construction editor is supposed to be very easy to use.

This will add a completely different element to multiplayer — a Team Fortress angle, but with each player in control of his own fortress. How cool is that? In addition, WoT features an intricate strategic spell system made up of 50 powerful artifacts each with its own very specific effects. "Some are offensive, such as decay and balefire. Some are defensive, such as reflect and absorb. Others disguise or transport you. The more powerful an attack is, the more time the target has to react to it with an artifact of his own," says Dahlgren. This system will make quick decision making more important than twitch reflexes, or

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Legend
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
RELEASE DATE → Q2 '99
3D SUPPORT → Glide, PowerSGX, OpenGL, Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Running under the *Unreal* engine should be enough, but it's really trying lots of new things.

THE HURDLE

Unreal still has major internet bugginess issues that no one has fixed. And the whole project is ambitious.

THE HIT

WoT seems to have found the perfect mixture of fantasy settings, action-oriented gameplay, and a deep storyline.



Jimbo, Billy-Bob, and Cleetus have a hankerin' for trouble.



who can pull the trigger first. Sounds suspiciously like BFG room-clearing effects (which we hate), but oh well. As long as there's a way to stop one with a spell of your own.

One of the other things that catches the eye is *WoT*'s amazing levels. The task of designing not just levels, but effectively recreating many of Jordan's detailed settings and atmospheres would have been daunting — except for the

fact that Legend's been doing that kind of stuff forever. After each setting goes through a huge artist mill and made into levels, they get arranged into the story. Taking place before the events in the books, the single-player game — "very much in the Jordan tradition," says Dahlgren — takes place from the point of view of an Aes Sedai, a female sorceress of sorts, as she attempts to stop "the Forsaken's plans to release the Dark One."

We don't know what that means (it should become all too clear as the story progresses), but it sure sounds appropriately ominous and scary. You'll get introduced to the other three main characters (evil, bad, naughty), and proceed through around 20 levels, experiencing a convoluted plot which also introduces all the elements used in multiplayer, such as casual customization and the strategic spell combat system. Finally, the

four characters will meet in a battle royale to decide the fate of the world — as good a segue to multiplayer as we've ever heard (in fact I believe it is the only one that's ever been tried).

The multiplayer game is what you might have been hearing the most about, partially because Legend's been pretty open with details as well as because it just sounds so damn cool. Two different game modes might not sound

WHEEL OF TIME

Referring to someone simply as Jordan should be reserved for MJ — for this we apologize PC ACCELERATOR November 1998



This month in *Dark Castle Architectural Digest*: *Wheel of Time*'s flying buttresses and arches.



Wheel of Time's gorgeous, incredibly detailed environments really show off the power of the Unreal engine.



like much, but it should have tons of depth (the actual number of maps has yet to be finalized but Dahlgren promises "a lot"). Traditional deathmatch is supported in the arena where there's a spell-slinging contest at the core of the action. Commanding citadels is an important part of the team match-up battles, where two or more teams can duke it out, each player with his or her own base. And all the multiplayer maps and scenarios can also be played alone, against an AI-controlled opponent.

So Legend's abrupt about-face from its usual stomping ground seems crazy at first, but the more you find out about it, in its full and creative use of Jordan's richly detailed world, its emphasis on storytelling, and its attention to detail, it's similar to the kind of games it has been making all along. Which ... is a good thing, I guess. So if you think that the

Quake Marines are gonna just stomp all over the wizards of *Wheel of Time*, think again.

— ED LEE got 100 pages into *Eye of the World* before getting bored and going back to watching "World's Greatest Decapitations" on Fox.



Now what the heck was I doing here again? Oh yeah, being placeholder art.



If a caption lands in an empty church and no one's around to hear it, does it make a sound?

FIVE QUESTIONS

DESIGNER/PRODUCER GLEN DAHLGREN ON BOOKS AS WEAPONS, JELLIED MASSES, AND OTHER SCINTILLATING TOPICS.

Q: Help us pigeonhole you: What exactly do we call this type of game? Being small-minded we need to pigeonhole things to fit our limited world view.
A: I like to think of the genre as action/strategy. If that's still too complex, then just put it into the "good" game category, as opposed to "bad" games.

Q: Is the *Wheel of Time* series all that?
A: Any book in the series can double as a weapon, even the paperbacks. Once you've been hit by 800+ pages of fantasy goodness, you think twice about stealing that person's lunch money.

Q: Who would win in a fight, Rand or Frodo?
A: Rand would undoubtedly kick Frodo's ass, but he'd also go stark raving mad in the process and destroy the world, so effectively: Tie.

Q: Which game besides your own are you most looking forward to playing?
A: I actually haven't had time enough to play a lot of games recently, so *StarCraft* remains on top of the "need to play" pile. Of the upcoming games, *Half-Life* looks pretty cool.

Q: What's your favorite type of cheese?
A: I've got to say headcheese here. Actually, I didn't have a clue what headcheese really was — is it made in the shape of a head? If so, whose head? So I looked it up. Turns out headcheese is the meat of a pig's head, feet, tongue, and heart cut up, boiled, seasoned, and pressed into a firm jellied mass. Cool! Now it's definitely my favorite — but as a projectile, not as food.

TIME AND AGAIN

CLINT EASTWOOD



Young, dumb, and full of ... oh, well, you get our drift



Time has made a roadmap of his face

GLORIA STUART



Sexy silver-screen legend



We liked you better as Kate Winslet

DICK CLARK



Dick Clark, 1935



Dick Clark, 1998

SUZANNE SOMERS



Dumb and young blonde bombshell



Still dumb, still blonde, and still doable

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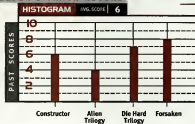
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Shadowman

How you do the voodoo that you do so well

Everyone knows what happens after you die, right? If you were good, you get to hang out on the clouds and play harp with the likes of Mother Teresa, John Denver, and Mahatma Gandhi (well, OK, maybe not Mahatma). If you were bad, well, then you, Adolph Hitler, Jeffrey Dahmer, and Genghis Khan are gonna be sitting around the fire roasting your, uh... chestnuts. This is the way most of us understand the afterlife, right?

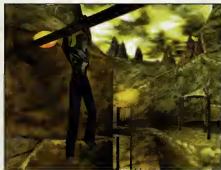
Well, Acclaim hopes to toss a mystical monkey wrench into this theory with its comic-based title *Shadowman*. Mike LeRoi is Shadowman, a New Orleans hit man whose guilty soul is ensnared in a treacherous web of voodoo after he's implanted with an ancient spiritual mask by a mysterious high priestess. He then spends eternity moving between Liveside, which would be pretty much where we are now, and Deadside, which

is kind of a spiritual waiting room for the newly deceased awaiting their earned destinations. Shadowman's mission is simple: He's to wage war on a legion of undead serial killers and other ungodly

horrors who want to break through into Liveside to wreak their horrible vengeance on the living. So much for that eternal rest gig.

So what's not to like? *Shadowman* is armed with a wide variety

of conventional and black magic weapons including the .50 desert eagle, the violator, the shadowgun, the flambeau, the calabash, the asson, and many, many more, which all come equipped with the



There's not much to do in hell. Folks just hang around a lot.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Iguana UK
PUBLISHER → Acclaim
RELEASE DATE → Spring '99
3D SUPPORT → Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

What could be more fun than wiping out evil demons and their legions of otherworldly psychos?

THE HURDLE

Third-person games are notorious for their lack of accurate aiming systems and strange camera angles.

THE HIT

The proper mix of action and adventure could make this title a favorite of undead the world over.



For some reason, that old black magic appears mighty blue to me.

FIVE QUESTIONS

EVIL MINION OR UNDEAD LOVE SLAVE? WE ASKED MIKE MEYERS OF ACCLAIM WHICH CATEGORY HE FIT INTO, AS WELL AS SOME OTHER, UH, ENLIGHTENING STUFF.

Q: Do you believe in voodoo?

A: No, but I do believe in peanut butter (clapping hands in background). [Gee, is this too obscure of a commercial reference?]

Q: What's your favorite voodoo song?

A: "Black Magic Woman" — Santana.

Q: Have you ever been a zombie?

A: No, but I once drank three Hurricanes at Pat O'Brien's in New Orleans — that's about as close to a zombie as a human can get.

Q: What's your favorite zombie movie?

A: *Down of the Dead*, George Romero is the king of the zombies.

Q: Are all zombies slow and dimwitted, or is that just an American perception?

A: I believe zombies are just creatures in need of better public relations.



Evidently, this section of hell is reserved for eternally damned dentists and orthodontists.

usual colored lighting and flashy effects. The *Deadside* promises to be full of all manner of evil beings to kill or unkill, depending on their demeanor. The engine, created by Iguana UK, seems competitive with other games and some of the art direction already looks stunning. Unfortunately, *Shadowman* could also carry the awful stigmata of all third-person games. First of all, it's damn

hard to aim at someone or something when your own body, dead or undead, gets in the way. The angles are always just a bit off, which can turn a one-shot zombie into a 10-shot juggernaut. Disconcerting, to say the least.

Secondly, the camera angles can be damned difficult to work with, especially since they're controlled by the engine and not the gamer. You can't shoot at what

you can't see. And finally, who wants to play a whole game while looking at some undead guy's rotting butt?

The game is looking to be slanted heavily on

the action side with a bit of find-the-key type adventure. As is always the case, the proper mixture of these elements and the control offered the player are crucial to the game's success.

When Acclaim first visited us with screens of *Shadowman*, we weren't very impressed. The graphics seemed flat and blocky, with no real definition or character. However, as these newer screenshots show, the Iguana team has been hard at work, putting a sharper focus on the Other Side. The game still has a way to go before measuring up to a truly beautiful game, like *Max Payne*'s early look, but we believe that Iguana and Acclaim will pull out all the stops to guarantee a unique visual feast. Acclaim cer-

REAL-LIFE ZOMBIES

The evil dead aren't just for fiction anymore! Check out this list of real live (or real undead) zombies.

ROB ZOMBIE

This White Zombie frontman truly believes that he's the physical incarnation of all that's evil. And, after listening to his music, who's to say he's wrong? Or just tone deaf?



Rob Zombie



Michael Jackson



Michael Caine



Mike Salmon

MICHAEL JACKSON

Not only was the *Thriller* video the only video he's made without makeup, but this ghoul has shown an appetite for young human flesh. Raw, of course.

MICHAEL CAINE

OK, OK, we know. He's not undead, only his acting style is. To be honest, if his acting gets any more understated, rumor is he'll be interred in Westminster Abbey soon.

MIKE SALMON

Let's see ... hates bright lights, only goes out at night, twitches, and shakes in the early hours, doesn't wear garlic ... yep, he's one of 'em!

tainly has something to prove to PC gamers.

Spring of '99 is still quite a way off, and with all of the tender, loving care that Acclaim and Iguana are showering on *Shadowman*, we can't wait to get our hands on this mysteriously magical title. After all, we may have a few undead serial killers of our own to dispose of around here.

— **BILL DONOHUE** *isn't an undead zombie, but his liver plays one on TV.*



Brilliant explosions light up the old Bony Yard. Shadowman has many dazzling spells at his command.



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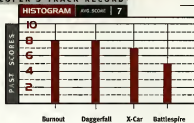
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Redguard

Elder Scrolls adventures? Bethesda joins the franchise-expanding crew

Despite its buggy release, the massive RPG *The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall* paid for a few pretty cool additions at the Rockville, MD home of Bethesda Softworks. Since back in the day, The Elder Scrolls world has wrapped itself around some innovative game design. *Arena* was an excellent *Ultima Underworld* action/RPG, and even *Battlespire*, though buggy (there goes that word again) and occasionally uninspired, rewarded those who struggled through to the later levels.

There's plenty of background material on the land of Tamriel, derived from the hours Bethesda staff spent playing role-playing games in the bowels (yuk, that sounds dirty) of their offices. The story will soon take on a more up-close and personal form in the third-person action adventure *Redguard*.

Redguard follows the story of Cyrus, a former member of the elite



On his quest to find his sister, Cyrus will meet a host of characters and may even want to talk to a couple. Or stab them.

guard, returning to the town of Hammerfell in search of his missing sister. A detailed backstory explains who the Redguard are and the factional divisions between the Crown and the Forebears. It's mapped out within some story boundaries that were set in both *Arena* and *Daggerfall*, and will be fleshed out more fully in a Pocket Guide to the Empire that will ship with the final product to explain the who, what, when, where, and why.

In a sea of third-person adventure games, what's so special



about *Redguard*? Aside from the appealing setting, the artwork that brings the town of Hammerfell to life is more vibrant and alive than most of the brown-walled dwellings we constantly see to endure. "We were very sick of dark dungeon crawls," explains Project Leader Todd Howard. "We wanted to do something outside, with a lot of color, and make it feel like an epic fairy tale."

Swashbuckling heroics are one of the last bastions of movie adventure to make their way to the gaming platform. Armed with a sword, Cyrus will employ fairly simple attacking and defending moves. In the tradition of fencing, timing is

key. While the range of moves is simplified to attack and defend,

attaching them to carefully timed jumps, strafes, and ducks can elicit the opening necessary to score a killing blow. To make things fair against multiple opponents, Cyrus will only face one at a time — the enemies throwing a condescending "He's yours" to ensure that this slightly unrealistic, but fair, gameplay device gets a context.

In an open, nonlinear world, with a high number of NPCs, character AI is a critical factor. With more than 5,000 lines of dialogue, the logistics for balancing a realistic environment are immense. Characters will remember what

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Bethesda Softworks
PUBLISHER → Bethesda Softworks
RELEASE DATE → November '98
3D SUPPORT → 3Dfx Glide, DirectX3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

The first opportunity to explore the nuances of the Elder Scrolls world. *Redguard* lets you get up close and personal.

THE HURDLE

Bethesda's track record of some buggy product could hurt initial impressions.

THE HIT

Swashbuckling and epic adventure in an open, nonlinear world. Cyrus could be the first polygonal Erol Flynn.



Hey, baby, what a nice pair of ... ears you have.

FIVE QUESTIONS

REDGUARD PROJECT LEADER TODD HOWARD TURNED HIS UNIQUE AND ALWAYS ENLIGHTENING GAZE TO THE PCKL FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: Is there a love interest?

A: No, Cyrus just wants to find his sister [for somebody say "incest"] ... not love. Maybe the sequel.

Q: Cyrus isn't any relation to Billy Ray, is he? Or is the lack of love interest a reason for wanting to include reference to, ahem, an achy breaky heart?

A: I'm proud that a Brit can see the humor in country music, too.

Q: What weapon would you like to have seen in *Redguard*?

A: The Millennium Falcon. Now there's a weapon. If we only had the license ...

Q: How many in-jokes would you estimate you've hidden away in there?

A: There are enough *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* references to create another game. There's also an Easter egg for *Ultima* fans.

Q: *Redguard*: Another *Tomb Raider* done. Discuss.

A: If I ever become a serial killer, I'm only going to kill guys named Rob Smith, except for the game journalist Rob Smith. He will just live in fear of "The Rob Smith Killer," knowing that one day his name will be called. And when I get him, and they have me on the evening news and ask me why, I'll say "Every time I saw him he called my game a *Tomb Raider* clone."

► you've talked about and even pass on information from other characters. The nonlinearity is also a bear for game balancing and pacing. "It takes a lot more effort to keep such a big game immediate at all times, and constantly providing another hook or a road to follow," Howard explains.

A monster bestiary, including skeletons, trolls, goblins, and a few bigger creatures thrown in for effect, supplies the nonhuman foes that Cyrus must face. Hammerfell is certainly going to be a world worth exploring (not always on foot though, as there is the potential for other more fantastic modes of transport). Rope swinging, clinging to ledges, running, and dodging are the core movement options available to make Cyrus' travels around Hammerfell flexible.

The project is certainly an epic undertaking. Nonlinearity causes all manner of AI, pacing, and balancing questions that Howard is quick to acknowledge, and given Bethesda's track record, we can only hope that these issues get worked out in time for the game's ship date. But *Redguard* has a colorful, vibrant appeal, a deep story to uncover, and should offer enough action to satisfy all Errol Flynn wannabes.

— ROB SMITH would look terrible in tights.



En garde! Move to the sides, then attack with slashing and hacking motions.



Oh! Someone's going to have to pay for that! #5@1% bloody vandals.

MEN IN TIGHTS

We excuse all tight-wearers in the 19th century because they didn't know any better. However, any man donning tights in the 20th century has issues. Here is a look at the good, the bad, and the just plain weird.



David Lee Roth

DAVID LEE ROTH SIGNATURE MOVE→ Midlife splits, and the split from Van Halen
STOCKING STUFFERS→ Rumor has it he used cucumbers
FLASHY OR FRUITY→ Flashy, but currently just fuzzy



Van Halen

WHERE IS HE NOW→ Tightsless in Tulsa. The washed-up rocker can't even fit into M. C. Hammer pants without the jaws of Life



M.C. Hammer

JESSE "THE BODY" VENTURA SIGNATURE MOVE→ Reverse Signatures
STOCKING STUFFERS→ A folding chair (to be used in cage matches)
FLASHY OR FRUITY→ You tell him he's fruity, we're not going to
WHERE IS HE NOW→ "The Body" is currently running for governor of Minnesota



Jesse Ventura

ROD STEWART SIGNATURE MOVE→ The "Do You Think I'm Sexy?" microphone slide
STOCKING STUFFERS→ Apparently a live dog. Allegedly
FLASHY OR FRUITY→ A little of both
WHERE IS HE NOW→ Nailing supermodels until he gets the nerve to inflict more aural pain on the public



Rod Stewart

MITCH GAYLORD SIGNATURE MOVE→ Gaylord Flip (or rear dismount)
STOCKING STUFFERS→ A balance beam
FLASHY OR FRUITY→ With a name like Mitch Gaylord, what do you think?
WHERE IS HE NOW→ Staring in the low-budget straight-to-video movie *Sexual Outlaws*



Mitch Gaylord



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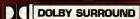
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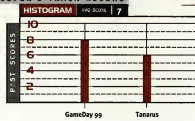


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Everquest

Pixies, dwarves, trolls, and fairies? In PCXL? Have we gone soft?

Er, no. Not really. I mean, 989 Studios' "massively multiplayer RPG" might not normally be the kind of game that you expect to

grace our pages. But give it a chance. You may end up liking it. Y'see, *Everquest* is taking the core concept of Origin's *Ultima Online* (creating a dynamic world

populated by thousands of real people at once, and numerous non-player characters and monsters) and putting it in 3D-accelerated first-person mode. Just through this cosmetic effect, the impact is quite startling. All of a sudden the environments look more inviting and your sense of involvement in the world is greatly heightened.

Currently in beta-testing stage, Norrath is *Everquest*'s world and could suffer from not having the instant draw that Britannia did

(having featured in eight previous *Ultima* RPG games). But more than 30 people are putting in 10- to 12-hour days and more in order to get things on track and allow support for up to 1,500 people on a server (tests at press time had managed 35% of capacity).

Starting with character creation, the background design philosophies become instantly apparent. Detailed models highlight the 12 races (including ogre and troll among the familiar fantasy milieu) and 14 classes (warrior, bard, magician, shadow knight, etc.) available to starting adventurers. A "name filter" has been incorporated to block out nonfantasy

This is the closest a role-playing fanatic is ever going to get to a real bar on a Friday night. Sad, isn't it?



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → 989 Studios
PUBLISHER → 989 Studios
RELEASE DATE → January '99
3D SUPPORT → Direct3D, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Ultima Online meets the first-person shooter in 3D-accelerated glory. With pixies.

THE HURDLE

The accessible nature of a first-person game should help you get more involved in your characters than *UO* managed.

THE HIT

Massive multiplayer games are fraught with difficulties and issues. *UO* was even sued.



a gnomish pup tries to hit YOU, but misses!
a gnomish pup tries to hit YOU, but misses!
a gnomish pup hits YOU for 1 point of damage.
You try to slash a gnomish pup, but miss!
a gnomish pup tries to hit YOU, but misses!
You slash a gnomish pup for 1 point of damage.
a gnomish pup tries to hit YOU, but misses!
You slash a gnomish pup for 1 point of damage.
a gnomish pup hits YOU for 1 point of damage.
a gnomish pup tries to hit YOU, but misses!
a gnomish pup tries to hit YOU, but misses!

First blood. Fighting with a gnomish pup consists of getting well-timed clicks on the icon. Hmm.

FIVE QUESTIONS

EVERQUEST PRODUCER BRAD MCQUAID IS THE FOCUS OF THOUSANDS OF FAN REQUESTS. BUT HE MANAGED TO POP HIS HEAD ABOVE WATER TO ANSWER THE [DRUM ROLL] FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: What's been the best fan idea?

A: Someone suggested dueling, where two nonplayer killers (PK'ing is a toggleable option) consent to duel to resolve their difference, and then return to their non-PK status.

Q: How do you make roleplaying cool?

A: By creating an environment that lets people roleplay and talk to anyone in the world at any time. Creating an environment where you can work together and form friends, roleplay without constantly being worried about being backstabbed.

Q: What's the most powerful magical item in Everquest?

A: We've not created it yet. There will be unique artifacts, but we've just finished the technology for the fiery avenger, a flaming two-handed paladin-only sword. It's powerful and looks cool, but there's likely to be more than one in the hands of high-level paladins.

Q: Who do you most admire in the industry?

A: Actually, it's Richard Garriott. In junior high I saw *Ultima II* on the Apple IIe and was blown away. It made me decide that I wanted to make games for a living. I got to meet him at E3 and he's a really nice guy. While I don't necessarily agree with way *Ultima Online* is going today, I certainly respect Garriott and his team.

Q: Ever seen a real troll?

A: Is that outside the 98 offices, or inside? The answer would be different.

names in order to retain the fantasy setting and try to force people to play the game in character. So, you're not going to see PCXL-Ass Kicker or YoMamma anywhere (although there still is a chance for Lord YoMamma). A bunch of stats need generating, and you get a certain freedom to do your own assigning of spare points. This will all be familiar to anyone who played Dungeons and Dragons in high school (so we're told; we were all out chasing chicks back then, honest). In fact, D&D seems to have been

**Environmental effects include rain and sleet.**

a powerful influence on the whole game mechanic style.

In towns, you can trade with NPCs (and other PCs), chat, visit guilds, train with masters in different specialties, and do all that community-type stuff. Heading off into the wilderness in search of adventure (treasure, monsters, derring-do, y'know the stuff) is at the heart of *Everquest*. More than 40 monster types should provide varied challenge for you, preferably with the help of a party of friends. Indeed, the biggest monster in the game — an incredible-looking red dragon — is likely to take about 100 level characters to defeat. That's the Tolkien-esque action slant that *UO* hasn't quite managed to grasp from its isometric perspective.

Since there's a lot going on, a detailed interface mechanism has been incorporated to let you trade easily; equip your character with

armor, weapons, and other paraphernalia; and fight. Unfortunately, in the beta build, combat had a definite noninteractive edge. It's almost — gulp — turn-based, in that you click on your weapon icon, which, depending on how many attacks you can get, is grayed out until it's primed to strike again. This system overcomes potential lag problems by removing the twitch factor, but doesn't help the interactivity.

As in any good fantasy game, magic will play a significant role, with five spheres of magic being concocted and combined to produce around 600 different spells. Help is going to be on hand from a whole slew of both 989 Studios-employed GMs as well as player "guides." That's part of the reason that, as with *UO*, you're going to have to cough up \$9.95 a month in fees after the initial time period that you get with the retail

AH, YOUTH

Admit it, you tried D&O at least once, if not once a week for five years. What else in your teen past are you now overly ashamed of (but secretly excited about)?

FASHION

- Jagged-edges cut-off sweatshirts that made you look buff
- Skinny leather ties weren't just cool, but stylish and old
- Tight terry-cloth shorts. Ahem, teen package

GIRLS

- Asked a girl to go "skating"
- Realized that you couldn't hook up a bra with one hand
- Got turned down by every girl you ever saw (often before you even asked)

TELEVISION

- You watched "Charles in Charge," but not for Nicole Eggert
- "Joanie Loves Chachi" ruled your Tuesday nights
- You secretly fantasized about Jo and Natalie from "Facts of Life"

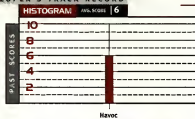
box promotion runs out. Other payment methods and rates are being discussed and may be announced before retail release.

There's certainly a lot to be curious about. The blend of hardcore, pencil-and-paper-style, role-playing game mechanics with the modern, accessible first-person perspective (although four other camera angles are supported) make an intriguing mix. Already, the beta version is providing a surprisingly immersive experience — one that will likely see defections from Britannia. "This true, online roleplaying could, in fact, be pretty cool."

— When discussing defecting to PCXL, ROB SMITH omitted the fact that he was a closet roleplayer.



Characters have lots of detail, and many locations have 3D-accelerated treatment.



Dark Vengeance

Can RPG geeks learn to fight?

You're in this medieval-style castle-like place, going around killing enemies and monsters that keep springing up all over the place. Yeah, I know: Been there, done that. But stone walls and all, *Dark*

Vengeance offers much in the way of innovation — and you'll get to go outside as well.

Billed as an RPG/action game, *DV* seeks to provide the fantasy setting, character building, and evolving storyline of the former genre, while offering the challenging

action-packed battles of the latter, a combination that has never been done with much success. The most obvious feature is that you play in third-person, so you can watch your character fight — which is especially important because the game offers multitudes of incredi-

bly imaginative weapons with fantastic effects. Reality Bytes' own engine, Rivet, provides very smooth 3D animation, and allows players to see their characters manipulate weapons or react to enemies' attacks. On the negative side, the third-person perspective makes it hard to see what's going on sometimes, and thus makes control more difficult.

"Players will see how the character's animations are affected by weapon selection, and how their player character will react to real-time damage from magic attacks, bloodstains from weapon attacks, even arrow shafts from an enemy archer. They'll also see how elements of the story are wound into gameplay through in-engine takeover scenes," says Jason Davis, Reality Bytes' vice president of research and development.

You can play as the female Trickster, a muscle-bound Gladiator, or the magic-wielding Warlock; weapons, fighting styles, storylines, and sexual preferences change accordingly. While your overarching concern is to vanquish the evil Dark Elf forces (i.e., kill everything through the 18 missions), Reality Bytes set out to differentiate itself from the first-per-



Surrender, or I'll zap you with my glowing rod.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Reality Bytes
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
RELEASE DATE → November '98
3D SUPPORT → Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Dark Vengeance brings the role-playing genre into a 3D action realm, with a huge breadth of imaginative weapons.

THE HURDLE

Balancing combat difficulty is crucial to this title's success, as is luring action fans into a fantasy world.

THE HIT

Lavish graphics plus deathmatch and team gameplay should help, but we still wonder about the battle interface.



Each character has nine unique weapons.

FIVE QUESTIONS

JASON DAVIS — ONE OF REALITY BYTES' FOUNDERS AND TECHNOLOGY GURU — UNDERGOES PCW'S FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: Where did the inspiration for *Dark Vengeance* come from?

A: *DV's* inspiration is originally from both me and another one of our founders, David Chait, who I've known since forever. We both have a lot of experience in 3D gaming, as well as D&D, so we've tried to create a game that combines the best features of fantasy gaming with the adrenaline rush of action games.

Q: How long has the game been in development?

A: Close to three years. The first year and a half was spent on creating and improving our core technology, and it's just the last year or so that has been spent on the actual game.

Q: What is it about gothic castles and such that's so appealing anyway?

A: The medieval fantasy world allows a great deal of creativity. We can let our imaginations flow with just about any idea we come up with, because, well, magic can do anything you want. Our artists and designers have free reign in such a world. It's fun, and we hope our energy will translate to gamers' enjoyment. Plus, who doesn't like oversized medieval and magical weapons?!

Q: What's your favorite gothic accent?

A: The Iron maiden is always nice ... but then there's the codpiece. Is that gothic?

Q: Which TV show is better: "The Addams Family" or "The Munsters"?

A: "The Addams Family," definitely!

son shooter market. "We've designed the combat to demand players to learn more realtime tactics involving character selection, and more discrete choices in combat rather than just firing randomly," Davis explains.

Each character has nine weapons and four "uniques," items that augment his or her abilities. From the four-level preview disc I played, it looks like plenty of imagination and thought have gone into the weaponry, and while some weapons are more effective against certain enemies than others (there are more than 40 enemy types), it's fun just to try 'em out for the hell of it. For example, one of the Warlock's long-range weapons, the vampire staff, launches a pair of bats that seek their target. His lightning rod shoots a bolt at the target, which then jumps to other enemies within reach — great when you're



Watch out for flying glass shards when destroying Stained Glass Dark Elves. Someone could lose an eye.

being attacked by throngs of bad-dies. The Gladiator's arsenal includes a thunder hammer, which explodes on contact, and a phantom edge, which trails three ghost blades after its initial swipe. While the Trickster was not available on the preview version I played, she, too, has cool, um, tricks. "She can throw sticky-bombs at an object or enemy, and then remotely detonate the charge while it's stuck to her opponent's body or a nearby wall," Davis reveals.

Boding well for the multiplayer game, Reality Bytes kept it in mind throughout the development process. "Multiplayer was a design element from the start, not an afterthought," Davis says. "In order to achieve great third-person multiplayer gaming, of course, everything has had to be Internet opti-

mized from the start. Integrating our animation server with our client-server gaming system has been a major achievement." Up to 32 people will be able to play in deathmatch or team games, and all the crazy weapons with their accompanying animations should make for some entertaining battles, to say the least.

But will *DV's* lush 3D environment and familiar gothic setting be enough of a lure? Can it win over hardcore action gamers with its lavish weapons and entice RPGers into brutal combat? If the critical difficulty level and character/enemy balance is perfected, it just may pull it off.

— **CARRIE SHEPHERD** spent the '80s dressed in black, seeking gothic settings.



Magic spells are big in this game. As the Warlock, you can turn yourself into a swimming mass of particles.

GOTH GIRLS

MORTICIA

ADDAMS

GOTH APPEAL →

Long black hair and gown are critical to gothness, and the octopus-like tentacles at the bottom of her dress provide added attraction.

HOW SHE'D FARE IN

DV → Morticia's pacifist nature just wouldn't cut it against the Evil Elves.

ELVIRA

GOTH APPEAL →

Cherish horror spokeswoman for the past two decades, Elvira undoubtedly has long-lasting charm.

HOW SHE'D FARE IN

DV → Elvira has a couple of built-in weapons that could be used to distract or smother enemies.

SIOUXIE SIOUX

GOTH APPEAL →

Gloom-and-doom chanteuse inspires castle-based slaughterer HOW SHE'D FARE IN *DV* → Could make the enemies so depressed, they'd actually kill themselves.

CIRCY

NIGHTSHADE

GOTH APPEAL →

Angst-ridden co-host of "Saturday Night Live" A Goth Talk listers to Bauhaus with Arznel Aloys.

HOW SHE'D FARE IN

DV → Completely unkillable, she'd be impossible to destroy.



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... has been suppressed
LONG ENOUGH!



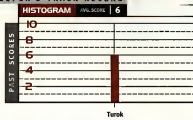
* Actual screenshots from the game



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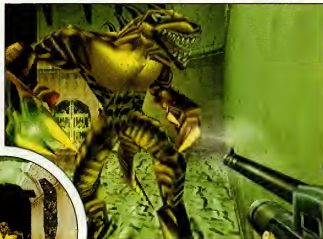


Turok 2: Seeds of Evil

Another console clone for the PC, and it's from Acclaim — yikes!

The general feeling among most PC gamers is, "We don't want your stinkin' console games." Because of that notion, many people have an unnatural (albeit well-deserved) hatred of Acclaim. The Glen Cove, NY-based game publisher has a history of putting its crappy licensed console games on the PC a year later. I'm here to tell you that it is time to forgive and forget. With *For-Saken*, *Turok 2*, and the upcoming *Shadowman*, Acclaim is actually in danger of getting itself a good reputation, which brings me to the point of this article.

Yes, *Turok 2* is a console game that is being made for the PC. However, this time around



Where the hell are you aiming that thing?



Acclaim plans to have the PC version launch simultaneously. "The original *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* for PC was almost an afterthought. The game was a faithful port of the hit N64 title, but it did not have all the features necessary to survive in the PC first-person shooter market, especially Internet play," says Al Mecklenburg, senior project manager at Igauana West. *Turok 2* is looking to keep pace in this highly competitive arena. The proprietary engine created by Igauana features soft-skinned enemies, unique geometry for each level, pin-point collision detection, and advanced real-

time lighting. While all these features are pretty much standard in upcoming shooters, at least technically the game can stand on its own. In fact, the accelerated graphics in *Turok 2* are looking quite stunning.

The live environments in *Turok 2* are a big help in immersing the player into all of the seven enormous, open-air single-player levels, which include the Port of Adia, The Underground Abyss, and The Death Marshes. Corny names aside, the levels in *Turok 2* offer a great deal of variety for taking down various lizard-esque bad guys. There are more than 30 enemies in the game, each with

FIVE QUESTIONS

AL MECKLENBURG, SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER FOR TUROK 2, WAS KIND ENOUGH (OK, WE MADE HIM) TO TALK ABOUT MUTATED WOMEN, DRUNK MORMONS, AND INFLUENTIAL NATIVE AMERICANS.

Q: Do you consider *Turok 2* a console game?

A: *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* was a port of a console game. *Turok 2* is a great first-person shooter designed with the PC gamer in mind.

Q: Any women with six breasts in the game? (They are in the comic.)

A: Actually, they have four breasts in the comic (not that we're counting). Adon, *Turok's* new advisor, has the normal number of breasts, but watch out, Lara.

Q: Favorite Indian: Tonto, Sitting Bull, Geronimo, Jim Thome, or Ed (from "Northern Exposure")?

A: I would have to say Ed.

Q: I hear you need sponsors to drink in Utah. Isn't that just wrong?

A: Big misconception. All you need is money. Is that why you won't visit the studio?

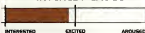
Q: What is going to make *Turok 2* special?

A: 24 awesome weapons, six massive worlds, 30 terrifying enemies, incredible bosses, extensive use of dynamic lighting, improved particle system, improved AI, responsive Internet play, I'm running out of breath... [Good thing this isn't six questions, huh?]

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Igauana West
PUBLISHER → Acclaim
RELEASE DATE → December
3D SUPPORT → DirectX3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

High-resolution textures, stunning effects, unbelievable weapons, and multiplayer support have *Turok 2* looking good.

THE HURDLE

It is a console game, designed for the N64 with the PC an afterthought. Is that enough?

THE HIT

Looks great, and focus on multiplayer should help. However, in a crowded market it still may not be enough.

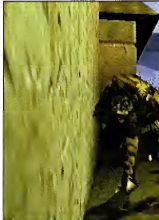
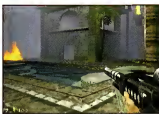


Fire effects, outdoor environments, and a world alive with explosions have *Turok 2* looking very good.

► unique AI, strengths, and weaknesses that make strategy and timing crucial in battle. The five boss creatures we witnessed were quite spectacular, with the vicious Queen Mantis topping them all.

So how do you kill all these blood-hungry bad guys? In the tradition of *Turok*'s incredible weaponry, the sequel has put together another impressive army of 24, including the war blade, scorpion missile, firearm cannon, storm bow, and many more. Of course, the usual bow, shotgun, pistol, and rocket launcher are there as well. The highly explosive weapons feature some of the best effects in gaming (on any platform) and ensure that this time around the Indians aren't outgunned. Because not every weapon works on every creature, you'll have to strategically select weapons to take out the variety of enemies.

The mission structure, levels, graphics, and enemies all look on par with other first-person shooter games, but the single biggest addition to the sequel is a multiplayer mode. The omission of multiplayer capability in the original caused an outcry and really ruined the game. *Turok 2* features a deathmatch mode with up to 16 players peer-to-peer, via a client server, or over a LAN. Mecklenberg gushes, "We have created several innovative modes of deathmatch play like Frag Tag. In addition to these, *Turok 2* will support team, capture the flag, and arena modes. We are creating around to new talismans (like *Quake* runes) for PC deathmatch only. When acquired, they will alter



Lizard-esque creatures are inherently mean. Here is more proof.

play in some subtle or not-so-subtle ways, providing even more variety to LAN/internet play. Players will also be able to choose from many prerecorded audio clips to taunt their opponents." If *Turok 2* can manage to pull off a compelling multiplayer experience without the bugginess that usually accompanies the first multiplayer version of a game, then we'll have no problem forgiving *Acclaim* for *Batman & Robin* — well, maybe.

— **MIKE SALMON** believes that you must plant the seed, sow the seed, and then grow the seed.



THE SEED FALLS

**JOH VOIGHT/
ANGELINA
JOLIE
FATHER**→

Squealed like a pig in *Deliverance* and now makes audiences squeal in movies like *Am*

DAUGHTER→ Hard to believe she came from the same gene pool as notoriously ugly dad.

VERDICT→ Neither has made a good movie this decade, but Angelina's much easier on the eyes

**CLINTON LIE/
THE DIRTY
TRUTH
BOLD-FACED
LIE**→

Close but no cigar.

**PERVERTED
TRUTH**→ Close enough to leave a stain while smoking more than just Cubans.

VERDICT→ Truth can be stranger than fiction ... err ... fiction.

**MARTIN/
CHARLIE
SMOKE
FATHER**→

Apocalypse Now and a series of bad movies with his countless sons.

SON→ *Wall Street* and a series of Heidi Fleiss girls (not to mention hermaphrodites) dressed in nothing but pompons.

VERDICT→ There are no winners here, but at least Martin never paid for it.



A variety of weapons will do more than just poke your eye out.



WHO ARE THEY?

Beyond Games is responsible for a couple of Atari Lynx titles, including *Bottle Wheels*, which won an Innovations Award at the 1993 Consumer Electronics Show. *Redline* is its first major project, being developed in its Salt Lake City headquarters, watched over by publisher Accolade.

Redline

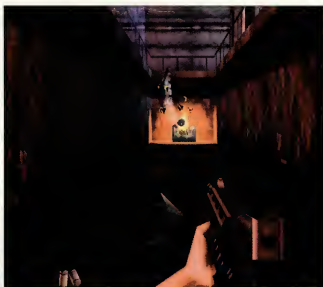
The best-looking game on two feet and four wheels

I could have grown a beard two feet long in the time since *Redline*'s original holiday 1997 release date and its final, definitely-gonna-happen, heads-will-roll-if-it-doesn't early '99 release. What's taken so long? Looking at the latest five-level fully playable build, the answer is clearly much tweaking, tilting, shaping, and focus.

Redline never had a problem with concept. The gangland backdrop, the clashing Red Sixer and Company families, and the trou-

blesome Leper and Templar organizations all competing for position is a good start. Your goal, to become da boss of your chosen gang, using bad-ass attitude, stealth, greed, and more greed is something of which we at PCXL officially approve.

Nor did *Redline* have a problem with its proprietary 3D engine. Assuming the position of hardware-accelerated only before hardware-accelerated only was in vogue highlighted a vision that I certainly hoped could live up ▶



Flicking switches to open new areas? Familiar.



These guys aren't just out for a Sunday drive.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Beyond Games
PUBLISHER → Accolade
RELEASE DATE → January '99
3D SUPPORT → Direct3D, PowerVR, 3Dfx Glide

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Hardware acceleration required — which was decided before 3D cards really caught on. Gang warfare is a sound topic.

THE HURDLE

Cutting edge at the time of its announcement, the engine now has to compete with the Dark Side.

THE HIT

Blending a first-person shooter with 176-style vehicle combat should lead to some explosive action.



The Ecstasy engine gives amazing detail and color as far as the eye can see (not unlike the pill).



PREVIOUSLY ON HALF-LIFE

Our hero had shown the promise of a truly great game, but would it ever be playable? Four pages of beautiful screens and stellar commentary (in issue one) just weren't enough, so we are back for more. Now that we've been playing the demo, we have some more insights any fan will want to check out, but is this the end? Will the game actually ship on its new planned time? Tune in next time.

Half-Life

It exists. Day One is out of the door and ready for scrutiny

How long have I waited for this? Nearly a year ago, I was sure that *Half-Life* would be a hit. Its March release date was in sight and the prospect was good. Then things started to slow down. It was revealed that the much-vaunted inclusion of Team Fortress multiplayer was being released as a retail add-on pack. Were cracks appearing in the Valve stronghold? Would the damn thing ever ship?

It's obviously near, as Day One proves. Being shipped to three OEM partners for inclusion as bundled software in their hardware products, the demo is bypassing most of the frantic hardcore crowd. The opportunity to try out what amounts to approximately 20% of the final game was enough to get us hot and bothered (and god knows that PCOL loves to get hot and bothered).

How is it? Thoroughly entertaining mixed with frighteningly



Here's a tip: Don't fight anything with the crowbar. Unless it's inanimate.

intense with a topping of oh-so-familiar. Let's not get ahead of ourselves. *Half-Life* is a first-person shooter based on the *Quake* and *Quake II* engines (this is for those of you who have been in a coma for the past two years), with a whole slew of Valve-created jiggery-pokery thrown in to confuse the pure adrenaline junky. Day One shows *Half-Life* to be that shooter, but with a cunning, story-driven streak that's likely to pull you by the throat into its depths.

It's a blend that *Quake II* or *Unreal* could never even dream of.

You already know about Gordon Freeman's background as a scientist, and you'll also have heard about his communication with thinking and acting nonplayer characters around him. Well, it all works. You talk, they respond. You do something stupid, they chastise. You help, they offer thanks. You

look beat up, they come at you with needles (to help).

Of course, fighting the good fight is what



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Valve
PUBLISHER → Sierra
RELEASE DATE → November '98
3D SUPPORT → DirectX 3D, Glide, OpenGL

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Continues apace. Most of the talking has been done; it's now up to the game to stand up for itself.

THE HURDLE

A chance to hit the waiting first-person shooter community first. With *Sin* the nearest rival, there's an eager crowd.

THE HIT

Will it have cried wolf? Has the expectation bar been raised so high that it could never live up to expectations?



Scripted sequences make you stop, watch, and be amazed.



The end of the demo comes just as you really want to get started.

everyone's really drooling after. Alien enemies fire off some impressive visual effects. Well-considered level design has also managed to make some familiar movement styles and attack patterns in the monsters still seem original and unique. Only a handful of the promised dimension-jumping denizens have been included in the demo, but they certainly have an otherworldly look and dislike for humanity.

It's the human adversary AI that really caught the attention. They caught me with a ploy that I've been doing to computer-AI monsters since the days of *Wolfenstein*: Involved in a face-off with a soldier, the click of his empty clip was quite audible. He turned to run and I chased. Rounding a corner, there were two of his buddies, him reloading in the background — I had a split second to realize what happened before the world went dark.

An introduction to the world of first-person shooters, complete with a holographic guide to steer your way through an obstacle course, shows Valve's pursuance of the new gamer. The basics are there, along with a chance to practice an advanced move like the long-jump, aided by the power of your HEV Mark 4 protective suit. But vets shouldn't worry — the challenge presented by the aliens and the humans will certainly be engrossing.



And an appearance by a character who I can only describe as similar to the "X-Files" cigarette-smoking man has me asking more questions that will no doubt only be answered at the end of the full version. Now if I just had a copy of that to play ...

— ROB SMITH has written more words on *Half-Life* than he cares to count. (And he's certain to write even more in the future.)

WAITING A LIFETIME

There are many things you'd be prepared to wait a lifetime for, and some that are never going to happen in a million years (aka *The Daitakana Syndrome*). Here are a few:

THE PERFECT GIRL
THE DREAM → Basically the Cameron Diaz character from *There's Something About Mary*. Sexy, smart, funny, nice. Oh, and by the way, she loves beer and SportsCenter.

THE REALITY → The only girls into SportsCenter and beer usually have names like Pat, are great softball players, have the body of a middle linebacker, and have more body hair than Robin Williams.

MENAGE A TROIS
THE DREAM → You're cleaning the pool when the Morris twins (who look something like Famke Janssen) ask you to apply some oil. The wah-wah guitar starts to play in the background and you are in heaven.

THE REALITY → Yes, many women are curious about same-sex tomfoolery, but it is much more likely that your girlfriend will have an affair with you. After all she doesn't want to make you that happy.

WORLD PEACE
THE DREAM → No more wars, no more guns, just a whole lotta love. It would be like the whole world was on Ecstasy.

THE REALITY → Without war and animosity the world would become boring, kind of like when Maddy and David finally were a couple on "Moonlighting." Pure happiness and glee just isn't very interesting to watch. Besides, CNN would never let this happen.

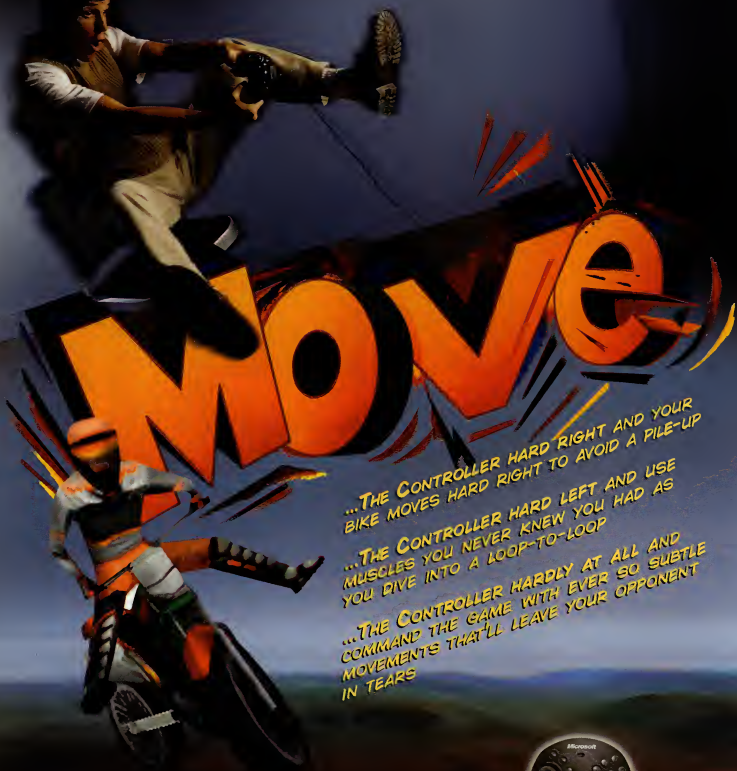


Image: [unreadable]

PC ACCELERATOR November 1998 Bruce Willis went to the casting call for "Moonlighting" on a drunken dare



Microsoft



...THE CONTROLLER HARD RIGHT AND YOUR
BIKE MOVES HARD RIGHT TO AVOID A PILE-UP

...THE CONTROLLER HARD LEFT AND USE
MUSCLES YOU NEVER KNEW YOU HAD AS
YOU DIVE INTO A LOOP-TO-LOOP

...THE CONTROLLER HARDLY AT ALL AND
COMMAND THE GAME WITH EVER SO SUBTLE
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REVIEWS

Slick

Need For Speed III came in and impressed the entire staff, but it arrived only days before the *Half-Life* *Day One* demo kind of stole some of its thunder. Normally we'd play a game of *NFS III*'s quality 24-7, all the while missing deadlines. Does this mean we stuck to our deadlines and saved the sanity of Carrie, our stressed-out managing editor? Of course not! Instead we split our time evenly among all of the games that arrived. You'll find a load of quality games in this month's reviews, all of which feature some spectacularly slick graphics. However, just graphics aren't enough. So read on and find out which games actually have some substance.



NFS III is the slickest of the slick.

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or 10 from our rigorous scoring system warrants this nifty logo. If you see the **PC ACCELERATOR** Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.



SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the undrivable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Stay away from these games at all cost!



CRITICAL ADD-ONS >>

Whenever a joystick, soundcard, or other computer accoutrement improves a game, we'll stick a corresponding logo on the review. We include only those devices that make the game better; just being compatible isn't good enough. If you don't see the logo, then that particular add-on doesn't do much for the game.



TILT



3D SOUND



GAMEPAD



MULTIPLAYER



STEERING WHEEL



FORCE FEEDBACK



JOYSTICK

ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator: how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system.)

ACCELE-RATED

CHIPSET



1 No significant difference from software. This game and card do not justify the expenditure.

2 The card provides solid enhancements that make the game more immersive and enjoyable.

3 This is what 3D cards are all about. Every effect is utilized, and the smooth framerate makes a huge gameplay difference.

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

Flawless. Perfect. Better than that sex dream with Elizabeth Hurley and Famke Janssen

10

A true classic. An excellent game that is well worth the money

9

A great game, but may feature a few minor flaws that are easily overlooked

8

A good, solid game that lacks the inspiration or vision of a truly great game

7

A game that rises above the average due to a hook in style or gameplay

6

The definition of mediocrity, this game doesn't commit any major crime other than being ordinary

5

A game that doesn't exactly suck, but probably won't hold your interest for long

4

OK, maybe there's an element of redeeming value in this game, but it still sucks

3

Very little of interest, this game is deeply flawed and should be avoided

2

Utter crap — Complete shit — A barrel of bullocks — In other words it sucks really, really bad

1

RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 — no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards — our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in we won't hold back and won't allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

GRAPHICS

Rendering quality, framerates, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

SOUND

Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

DEPTH

How often you find yourself playing a game, and how long, are good indicators of its quality.

DESIGN

The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

RATING



DEVELOPER → Electronic Arts
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
REQUIRED → P166 (P133 with 3D acceleration), 90MB hard drive space, 16MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL → P200, 12MB Voodoo 2, 32MB RAM, 270MB hard drive space, force-feedback joystick

Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit

killer game!

The king is dead! Long live the king!

MULTIPLAYER

FORCE FEEDBACK

GAMEPAD

ACCELE-RATED

With the 12MB Righteous 2 the game was tested on, *NFS III* flew with all graphic options on, even though the tested machine was a P200 MMX, and not a P11. It's one of the first games out of the chute that has Vx implementation, but without a 12 megger, you don't get a dashboard.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



MATROX G200



RIVA 128



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

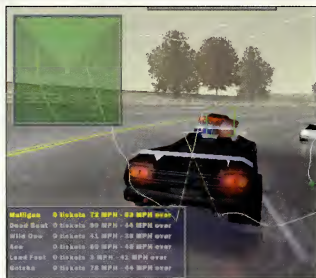
Need for Speed III: *Hot Pursuit*. Even the name has a suggestive sensibility to it that

Instantly appeals to the male psyche. Electronic Arts took the ideology of Accolade's primo street driving sim from the '80s, *Test Drive*, and brought it up to the 32-bit '90s with a style and panache that Accolade's recent revisitation to its own series couldn't match. Up til now, the last game in the series, *NFS II Special Edition*,

which was really more of a full-priced apology for *NFS II*, has been the best arcade-style racer available for the fast and loose driving grind on your PC. It was dripping with 3Dfx-powered, coin-op quality goodness, and the sort of cars that would bring in flocks of empty-headed women your mother definitely wouldn't approve of.

But EA never leaves things alone when it can make a yearly update instead, and thus we have *Need for Speed III*. And a yearly update is a good way to look at this latest

In the series. Direct3D acceleration has been added, and the level of eye candy has been taken up a notch. Cars have a pseudo-reflective skin; you can alter the color and even tweak the cars' handling. Weather effects are more expansive, with rain, snow, and dirt splashing against your windshield to great effect. And from the pumping revs of the engine to the sounds of the storms and the police radio chatter, sound effects match the graphics every inch of the way.



Speed, drop spikes, and smash civilians — being a cop rules.



Check out the windy track, complete with helpful commentary and close-ups.

However, the music, while tolerable, lacks much of the evocative spark that marked the last game's soundtrack.

Virtually every aspect of the game is completely tweakable at any time — switch any of the graphic goodies on and off while the game is paused, and you instantly see the effect. Controls are completely customizable, and the scalable force-feedback effects are killer, even making you



Thank goodness for rain tires. And brake lights. Keep your distance.

MIDLIFE CRISIS

So who normally drives around in these overpriced cars? Balding 50-year-olds who have just dumped their first wife and abandoned their children. Here are some other ways to make up for sexual inadequacy when a \$50,000 muscle car isn't an option (or enough).

- Co-eds: light, airy, and tasty, yet not filling enough to make you want to commit
- Start a game magazine that has sidebars like this and pictures of hot babes spread throughout its pages for no discernable reason
- Act like all you care about is games, when in fact you couldn't get laid if your life depended on it
- Live with the ideology that any girl who doesn't want you is clearly a lesbian

fight for control during adverse weather. Control pad response was exceptional as well.

But the real appeal of the game is the cars: Ferraris, Lamborghinis, Jaguars, Mercedes, and other overpriced dream machines that, in all likelihood, aren't even street legal in the U.S. Thirteen are at your command in total, each with a distinctive feel, and more are to be released online. The nine tracks (including a bonus course) are all the usual coin-op racing fare, including the prerequisite water tunnel stretch, temple crossing, mountains, and urban scenery. They're well-designed and challenging, coming complete with the occasional shortcut here and there, along with night, weather, mirror, and reverse track options.

But there's more than just the usual tournament, single race, and elimination racing mode to dominate. Hot Pursuit mode is one of the most entertaining driving variations seen in a long while. You play



as either the law or the lawbreaker on any of the courses, and try to outdo the other. The cops must meet their ticket quota by pulling over speedsters, even using tire spikes to stop them, while the speedsters must evade the cops using guile and radar. It's immense fun for either side, and you can do it in multiplayer mode, which increases the game's worth noticeably. All told, *NFS II* supports eight-player LAN action, two-player split screen, modem and serial, and (finally) TCP/IP network capability.

The few complaints with the game are slight — smoke trails look flat, and the reflective surface is really just a prerendered illusion that isn't always accurate. But those are minor caveats, and overall, this is a proper successor to the old king. Fans of arcade and semi-simulation racers are sure to find plenty of drive in their lives after putting this baby to the test.

— JASON D'APRILE leads a strangely unhappy and tasteless existence due to the lack of a Lister Storm in his life.



GRAPHICS

- Full of coin-op racer extravaganzas like dust trails and weather effects.

SOUND

- Great car effects. The police chatter is especially cool.

DEPTH

- Downloadable cars add to play life. Hot Pursuit mode gives it more depth.

DESIGN

- Basically *NFS II SE* with more. Enough improvement to warrant its worth.

RATING 9

+ Pluses

- Beautiful graphics
- Distinct feel for each car
- Cool tracks and hot cars

- Minuses

- Mainly just minor visual upgrades
- That reflective effect looks fake
- Some cheesy 2D effects

DEVELOPER → Pyro Studios
PUBLISHER → Eidos Interactive
REQUIRED → P120, 16MB RAM, 150MB hard drive space, 4x CD-ROM
IDEAL → P166, 32MB RAM, 8x CD-ROM, 16-bit sound card

Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines

Killing Jerry Schmitenheizenfuhren

ACCELE-RATED

There's a high level of graphic detail in the characters and environments, but none of it requires high-end graphics hardware.

HUMANITY TEST

In a constant effort to save our souls, PCOL has created the very first



Humanity-O-Meter. Participate in these tests and see exactly how deep in hell you are going to burn.

TEST 1 → Go see *Saving Private Ryan* in its entirety. Sneak some spaghetti and meatballs into the theater, or veal with sauce, or something warm and reddish and gunky. Afterward, immediately go home and play *Commandos*. If you have trouble enjoying yourself, there's hope for you yet.

TEST 2 → Stop channel surfing on the story about starving, diseased, or crippled children (usually PBS). Now turn to Nickelodeon or MTV. If you start wishing that Hanson and the annoying brats on Nickelodeon would be struck with a similar affliction, we'll see you in hell.

TEST 3 → Go to the Drudge Report (www.drudgereport.com/drudge.html) and read about what really happened in the Oval Office. If at any point you become turned on, or aren't driven to projectile vomiting, then you are hopelessly inhuman and just plain sick.

From the instant you see the box cover art for *Commandos* — an ominous portrait of a steely-eyed Jerry

guard about to get his throat slit from behind by a Green Beret — you know this is a game with style and attitude out to here. *Commandos* is an immensely detailed real-time tactics game where you command six individual WWII-era Allied commandos in 24 spec-op missions set all over the European and North African war theaters.

But this isn't your dad's realtime strategy game. No vast armies, no resource harvesting, no fog of war, and definitely no "tank rush" mindset. Blaze in where angels fear to tread, and the Nazis will kick the schneiss out of you before you can say "Ich bin ein dumbkopf."

In each mission, you're given historical background and a tactical briefing of the mission site and your objectives. Graphically, the game is immensely detailed — an overhead isometric view of compounds filled with trees, vehicles (which can be entered and driven), fuel barrels (which can be used for demolition purposes), crumbling walls, drifts of snow, and more; almost everything serves some functional purpose. Walking upright through the snow, for example, leaves footprints that can tip off the wary German guards,



Awareness of the locations helps survival.

who constantly patrol and visually scan the environments (a sweeping line-of-sight cone indicates which portions of the map the enemy can see at any given moment).

You command several men at once, and the game offers a multiple-camera scheme so you can (attempt to) watch everybody at once. Stealth is the order of the day, as you'll always be outnumbered — sometimes hideously outnumbered. Guns are loud, and tend to attract Nazis, bullets, and all kinds of bad stuff. Better to distract the guard in question with an audio decoy and silently slit his goose-stepping throat from behind while he's wondering what's making that awful sound in the trees. Oh, and you'll have to drag his carcass off behind a wall or hide it in a barrel. Yeah, it's a pretty nasty game.

It's also a darn impressive one: The opening cinematics and mis-

sion intros are filled with WWII film footage and bits of military history to put everything into perspective. Only veteran gamers will even think to gripe about micromanaging strike forces — these guys are tough, but leave one alone when he comes under fire, and he'll probably die (with a game this detailed, it pretty much has to be that way — if not for this aspect, our overall rating would be higher still). With men this elite and specialized, it only takes one casualty to render the whole operation FUBAR. *Commandos* is a sharp, weighty tactical game with a pleasing sense of history — and one that'll clear all those bad, lazy RTS habits out of your system, schneil.

— CHRIS HUDAK is a close personal friend of Boltz's Moru.

GRAPHICS

Excellent, highly detailed effects that add gameplay elements.

SOUND

Realistic sound effects, and voices with a sense of personality for each commando.

DEPTH

It wastes no time getting to the nitty-gritty of the action after the tutorial.

DESIGN

A deeply engrossing game, even for veterans (so to speak), and a pleasing historical feel.

RATING

+ Pluses

- The ability — nay, the need — to use stealth and deception
- Wonderful historic sense to missions and intros
- Multiple cameras to keep an eye on your men

Minuses

- Forces must be constantly micromanaged
- Inconsistencies with visual mechanics



In a stroke of marketing good fortune, *Saving Private Ryan* has made *Commandos* a hot property. But then again, slaughtering Nazis is good value in any circumstances.

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DEVELOPER → Silent Software
 PUBLISHER → Ripcord
 REQUIRED → P200, 16MB RAM,
 175MB hard drive space, 2MB PCI
 video, 4X CD-ROM
 IDEAL → P200, 32MB RAM, 3D card,
 24X CD-ROM, force-feedback stick with
 twist rudder control

Return Fire 2

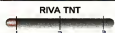
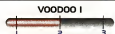
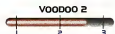
Like a shoot-'em-up, but with the life sucked out



FORCE FEEDBACK

ACCELE-RATED

Simplistic graphics are given a new lease on life thanks to 3D acceleration. Lots of sharp shiny things to show off your Voodoo — but there's no real need for anything as posh as a Voodoo 2.



API SUPPORT: OpenGL (our G200 and TNT drivers don't support OpenGL)

CONFUSION

An attempt at a "seamless" interface in *Return Fire 2* resulted in a confusing, near impossible-to-use setup. Following are some of the only things that are less intuitive.

- Setting the VCR clock
- The 320x240 form (EZ my ass)
- Bill Clinton's "explanation"
- Any plot in a David Lynch movie
- The infield fly rule
- The person Christy Brinkley married Billy Joel
- The reason anybody would marry Billy Joel
- Girls going to the bathroom in packs
- The method behind a PCXL boxout
- Women

Let me just make one thing clear before I even get started. I loved the first *Return Fire*. I played it on the 3D0. I even played the PlayStation version — so you'd think they'd have the decency to reward my loyalty. But no, instead, Ripcord sticks this one right in my eye. Bastards.

Return Fire started life as a graphically ambitious top-down scroller. Sure, there was a little bit of strategy, but not enough to really bother you. Largely the game involved the large-scale destruction of an already war-torn hellscape. *Return Fire 2* takes the same theme, but coats it with a glistening veneer of liquid poop. In what appears to be some misguided attempt to appeal to *StarCraft* fans, they have made the whole process infinitely more complex than it needs to be, and in the process, ruined a perfectly good shoot-'em-up.

If you ever get past the complicated option screen, you'll find yourself "controlling" one of six vehicles for traversing air, land, and sea (the number and range increase as the single-player game progresses). The standard keyboard layout is retarded beyond belief. The only person in the building who could play it without complete remapping was Fingers, the staff octopus. The tank, especially, suffers from appalling con-

trol, since you have to manipulate the turret to raise or lower shots. Ironically, it's easier to control the helicopter or the jet. Vehicle management is one of the only simple functions in the game. You choose a new vehicle from your arsenal every time you're killed. Sometimes it makes sense to use a fast, lithe truck against the slow, cumbersome tank. And sometimes not, cuz you get your ass blown up.

The addition of Glide-enhanced 3D is great, and some of the levels (there are 36 in all, each available in multiplayer) look amazing (with 16 players at once, the experience is explosive to say the least), but in software, much of the sheen is lost.

Return Fire 2 has been pretty heavily built as a multiplayer game through Mplayer immediately, and to be fair the LAN and Internet options are pretty good. The fact is, though, that playing against real opponents feels no more involving than playing against the computer.

The only real reward in playing this game is the feeling of achievement when you finally master the controls of one of the vehicles. It's a shame because the graphics, levels, and gameplay of *Return Fire 2* are acceptable, but the lousy control and astonishingly moronic interface ruin the game.

— FRANK O'CONNOR *uses a veneer of liquid poop to style what is left of his hair.*



Blow up stuff with a wide variety of military vehicles.

GRAPHICS

Sharp and smooth, but utterly devoid of character or style.

SOUND

Not as good as the original, but still filled with bombastic war themes.

DEPTH

Too deep for its own good. Gets in the way of what should be simple shooting.

DESIGN

An example of how not to design an interface.

RATING 5

+ Pluses

- Challenging
- Lots of multiplayer options
- 3D graphics

- Minuses

- Repetitive gameplay
- Overemphasis on strategy
- Terrible, terrible interface



Real 3D trees and terrain can't lift the graphics above blandness.

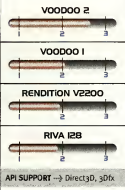
DEVELOPER → Gremlin Interactive
PUBLISHER → Fox Interactive
REQUIRED → P90, 16MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM, 100MB hard drive space
IDEAL → P200, 32MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM, Voodoo 2 card

Motorhead

The lights! Look at the lights!

ACCELE-RATED

The most important element of graphics in a racing game: frame rates... followed closely by lens-flare effects, of course. It's no surprise, then, that a Voodoo 2 is the card of choice.



Note the blurring effect.



The real reason people enjoy auto racing? Because tailgating just rocks!

If lens flare were a god, Fox Interactive's *Motorhead* would be a prime offering on its 3D-accelerated altar. Endlessly gorgeous, colored translucent little octagons of the stuff flood the game, piercing through its cyberpunk nights to light your way through a haze of coin-op envy and speed-induced hysteria. But arcade-style racers aren't exactly in short supply lately, and this tends to work against the game. It's not a bad racer, but it's just not particularly distinctive among the throngs of other lens-flare worshipping, fog-sucking arcade racers we've seen lately.

Sporting a fine, if not awe-inspiring, physics engine, *Motorhead* does a pretty good job at walking the arcade racer walk. Powerslides seem to be missing, but at least your cars have a good bounce to them when they smash into the concrete barriers at 200mph. The game also suffers from obnoxiously cheesy and mysteriously frustrating computer opponents (in both the basic league and single race modes), although they do screw up now and then.

The eight tracks include plenty of breakneck turns, scenic back-grounds, and speed burning



If I had any one of these cars, my dating woes would be over.

straight-aways. Throughout all of them, racers get the usual assortment of misdirected plane pilots (in this case, hovercars), dead-end lanes, some extremely keen jumps, and, of course, street lamps that give off all the lens flare that's fit to render — which is, apparently, an awful lot. Also worth mentioning is *Motorhead*'s new blur option, wherein everything takes on a ghosting, blurred appearance for those times when you want a migraine to accompany your racing experience. It's sure to catch on like gangbusters and be in every racer from now until the next millennium.

Motorhead supports up to eight over a LAN, and Fox Interactive plans to have an Internet gaming server as well. The game also has a plethora of graphics options, allowing you to tweak to your heart's content.

Motorhead is entertaining for what it is, but aside from the almost excessively computer-generated look and flood of lens flare, there's nothing at all original or distinctive here. Not that this is a terrible flaw — it is an arcade racer after all.

— JASON D'APRILE drives a station wagon and likes it.



POINTLESS F/X

The most over-used and annoying effect in modern gaming is lens flare. *Motorhead* is a principal abuser of this effect; we thought up some effects we'd rather see more of.

REALISTIC SMOG → After racing through the L.A. track, how about having to wash all the airborne crap off the car and take it in for EPA and corrosion testing?

EVEN MORE REFLECTIVE, TRANSPARENT CHROME-ENDED SKINS → So that our racing games can get closer to that oh-so-quaintly absurd iMac look, and more importantly, so babes will look even better while lying on top of the hood.

BETTER AND MORE REALISTICALLY BOUNCER BREASTS → A general wish here, and maybe it's just me, but can Lara really be that perky all the time? Sure a little gameplay has an amusing effect on most of us, but this is ridiculous.

THE RETURN OF FMV → With the general understanding that this can only be used for scantily clad, well-endowed women, and do nothing to tell the story. This way we'd have more reason to run pictures of Alyssa Milano, Christina Applegate, and Catherine Zeta Jones. Hey, we could even interview them to some seedy hotel. Yeah, I like this idea.

GRAPHICS

Eye-candy laden, with a blatantly CGI-rendered look.

SOUND

Some cool techno tunes, and appropriate motorizing sound effects.

DEPTH

You must master the earlier tracks before you can proceed in the game.

DESIGN

Fun, fast, and sleek looking, but totally unoriginal and indistinctive.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Decently designed tracks
- Fun, fast gameplay
- Lots of visual options

- Minuses

- Same-old, same-old
- Emphasis on lens flare
- Annoyingly difficult opponents

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DEVELOPER →	Eidos
PUBLISHER →	Eidos
REQUIRED →	P90, 16MB RAM, 115MB hard drive space, 1MB video card
IDEAL →	P233, 32MB RAM, 190MB hard drive space, Voodoo 2 card

Deathtrap Dungeon

Tomb Raider meets blood, gore, and dismemberment

ACCELE-RATED

A Voodoo 2 at 800 x 600 resolution showcases the vivid graphics and detailed character animation of *Deathtrap Dungeon*. Knock the res back to 640 x 480 and you get similarly solid performance from a Voodoo 1 card.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



MATROX G200



RIVA TNT



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

BARE-ASSED

Red Lotus' computerized booty is only the latest in an increasing number of computer games to feature a bodacious female protagonist wearing not much more than a few pixels of modesty. Here is our guide to these women and how to make them yours. (This is a joke. These women are not real — get a life!)

RED LOTUS

GAME → *Deathtrap Dungeon*

WHAT TO WEAR →

PICKUP LINE →

"How would you like to hold a two-handed sword?"

LARA CROFT

GAME → *Tomb Raider*

WHAT TO WEAR → Bomber jacket

PICKUP LINE → "Doesn't matter what you say, she ain't sleeping with any of us"

ALLISON HUXTER

GAME → *Space Bunnies Must Die*

WHAT TO WEAR → Flannel

PICKUP LINE → "Your trailer or mine?"

RYNN

GAME → *Drakon*

WHAT TO WEAR → Anything but reptile-skinned clothing

PICKUP LINE → "How do you feel about wrapping your legs around something besides a fire-breathing dragon?"

If *Deathtrap Dungeon* has so many problems, then why did I like it as much as I did? Despite its warts, the game uses 3D graphics effectively to let you live in and explore a strange, atmospheric world.

Based on a series of interactive books by author (and current Eidos chairman) Ian Livingstone, *Deathtrap Dungeon* appears to be an attempt to reuse the 3D-world technology of *Tomb Raider* in a new way. As the adventurer of the moment (the bicep-laden Chindog or the T&A-providing Red Lotus), you must get past lever-pulling and maze-solving puzzles; fight giant spiders, huge rockmen, and towering minotaurs; and ultimately conquer four dragons. Before you finish exploring, you'll encounter more blood, more severed limbs, more monster combatants, and more puzzles than Lara ever faced.

Gore, extreme violence, and the option to play as a buff male character or a round-cheeked female character all sound great. But wait, spandex lovers, this attractive action concept is knee-capped by some nasty realities.

First, character movement is awkward in the extreme. After experiencing frustration trying to corral the characters with joystick and jopyad, I fell back on the tried-and-true keyboard, which turned out to be the best choice.

Worse yet is the 3D camera control. The camera takes disorienta-



It's Groucho and Harpo's old mirror-image comedy routine.

tion to new heights of nausea. Instead of "damping" camera movement so the POV slowly and logically assumes its new place (as in *Tomb Raider*), *Deathtrap*'s camera tries to solve the problem with speed. A little shifting of your character and unexpectedly the camera whips through the air, spins around, and takes another position.

The multiplayer option is LAN only, but no need to bother since gameplay is limited to player-to-player combat and, frankly, the performance is a bit sluggish.

So why the hell did I actually get a kick out of this game? The graphics and sound effects are highly evocative and really show off the benefits of graphic acceleration. Wandering through a gigantic beehive is truly eerie. And I was genuinely frightened when a giant spider suddenly dropped into my path. It puts you in a real place. Exploring that "real place" is a fascinating experience in *Deathtrap*.



Once killed, the spider's legs and body fly in opposite directions.

Hope for a sequel with improved character control and a multiplayer option that includes Internet play. In the meantime, while we wait for Lara Croft to put on her shorts for the third time, *Deathtrap Dungeon* provides a more bloody reason for 3D action/adventure fans to stay at their keyboards.

— BOB LINDSTROM is not turned on by female computer characters, despite his continual references to them.

GRAPHICS

Huge multilevel environments with evocative graphic details.

SOUND

Good use of phase tricks create an expansive audio environment.

DEPTH

Though it's relatively large, most players will finish this game fairly quickly.

DESIGN

It's just a dungeon crawl transported into today's 3D graphics world.

RATING

5

+ Pluses

- Plenty of animated destruction for gorehounds
- Well-designed levels

- Minuses

- Stiff, sometimes maddening character controls
- Monsters a bit too easy to beat



Joined by a three-headed, fire-breathing monster, Red Lotus decides to see if rubber bustiers will melt under extreme heat.

DEVELOPER → Westwood Studios
 PUBLISHER → Westwood Studios
 REQUIRE → P90, 16MB RAM, 60MB
 hard drive space, 4X CD-ROM
 IDEAL → P166, 32MB RAM

DUNE 2000

The Worm God giveth, and the Worm God taketh away



MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

It might have been updated from the first incarnation, but not to the point where any 3D accelerators are going to make the blindest difference to framerate.

OTHER CLONES

Hell, if the Scottish have this technology, then you know the rest of the world has had it for years. Here are a couple other things that give suspicion: have been made from DNA samples.



BACKSTREET BOYS CLONED FROM → DNA samples taken from stone-washed genes of New Kids on the Block. Former member Jodeci Knight. **RESULT →** More dancing, singing, while boys who act like they grew up in Cheshire rather than the lush Hollywood suburb they really came from.

TITANIC CLONED FROM → 1958's *Titanic* film. A night to remember — it even shares scenes from the James Cameron over-named blockbuster. **RESULT →** Everyone gets rich, Leo gets laid, and original director Roy Ward Baker was forced to direct bad TV series.



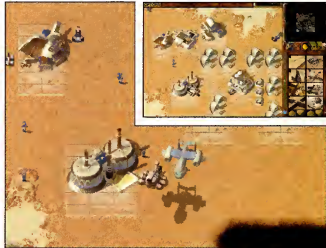
Cheesy FMV — there's quite a lot of it.

How could *Dune 2000* not be a good game, wrapped around the gameplay scheme that launched a thousand realtime ships? The hell of it is, *Dune 2000* isn't — follow the subtleties of my syntax here — just like *Command & Conquer*, it's just like *Command & Conquer*, sprites and sound files swapped out (and sometimes not even then), with some *Dune*-flavored sprinkles dumped on top.

The basic idea is, the Emperor has issued a decree that whichever House (Atreides, Ordos, Harkonnen) collects the most Spice Melange (currently the leader is English footballer David Beckham) throughout a planetwide three-way military imbroglio (no, not the sexy, pouty-tipped singer of Torn), will be given control of the desert world Arrakis, aka "Dune" (aka "Tatooine"). The only rule is that there aren't any rules. From the interface to the sound effects to the basic applicable tactics, there isn't a thing here that a C&C player won't instantly slip into gear with: Build structures, create units, send out the harvesters to collect Spice Melange.

Due to the local conditions on Arrakis, there are a few changes — large portions of the map are unsuitable construction sites, and you must restrict your building to the limited shelves of dark, exposed rock that provide stable ground. Even then, pallets of concrete should be laid down first, or buildings will be susceptible to the fierce, erosive conditions of the planet and will degrade over time.

Also, such stable rock shelves are the only places you can amass attacking forces with 100% certainty that some big-ass roaming Sand Worm the size of a shopping mall won't suddenly lurch up out of the dunes and commence to picnic on your units, while your attention is elsewhere engaged. Obviously, these geographic safe-havens can direct the action and your strategies to a certain extent,



The Carryall can airlift harvesters to and from the Spice fields (where they're growing a replacement for Ginger Spice). Be careful with base design in cramped conditions.

and often your battle plans will depend upon them.

In time, second-string forces such as smugglers, humorless mercenaries, and Fremens (native sand-dwellers who worship the Worms) will come into play, offering resistance or even alliances. You can even employ Thumpers to attract the attentions of the lethal Sand Worms, if this seems like a wise course of action.

But overall, this is simply a dirt-colored C&C overhaul, complete with the frenzied tank rushes, plodding mop-ups, and occasionally blithering AI (I once alternated suicidal, single-scout attacks on the left and right flanks of an enemy base just to watch the entire enemy army scramble back and forth for 30 minutes like a hundred bumbling, beleaguered tennis players). To reiterate: D2K is excellent; it's just not ground-breaking. If you're new to RTS games or you're a *Dune* freak, you're almost certain to dig this. If you've already done the C&C thing, *Tiberian Sun* is the game you're waiting for.

— CHRIS HUDAK has never had a hangover (lie), and has been orested six times (soddy true).

GRAPHICS

Excellent, detailed — but there's only so much you can do with 22 shades of desert yuck.

SOUND

Commanded there, conquered that. With the *Dune* background, much more was expected.

DEPTH

Fits the basic RTS specs, but no frills — no formations, unit behaviors, etc.

DESIGN

Not terribly inspired, but every bit as good as C&C — exactly like C&C, you might say.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Three races to choose from
- Two words: Sand Worms!
- Minor wild-card forces (Fremens, mercenaries, smugglers)

- Minuses

- Does not take advantage of C&C improvements found in *Red Alert*
- Still no unit queuing, except for starport purchases
- It's C&C lite

DEVELOPER → MAK Technologies
PUBLISHER → Interactive Magic
REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM,
 101MB hard drive space, 4X CD-ROM,
 4MB PGV video card
IDEAL → P1400, 32MB RAM, 174MB
 hard drive space, force-feedback joystick
 or gamepad

Spearhead

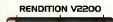
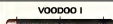
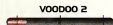
"Stop me? You and what army?"

FORCE FEEDBACK

MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

Spearhead misses the boat on a lot of Glide and Direct3D hardware features. There's not much in the game's graphics to suggest it's a hardware-accelerated game.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

TANK JOBS



Famous tank jobs by U.S. presidents

KENNEDY → Tanks Cuban invasion at Bay of Pigs (1961)



NIXON → Tanks his presidency over Watergate (1974)



CARTER → Tanks his rescue of hostages in Iran (1979)



REAGAN → Tanks the Iran-Contra controversy (1986)



CLINTON → Tanks the proper use of a zipper (1998)



CLINTON → Tanks the proper use of a zipper (1998)

The Air Force and Navy fly boys may have grabbed most of the glory during 1990's Desert Storm, but it was the armored cavalry and infantry that had to go in and do the real grunt work. After driving around in an Abrams M1A2 battle tank for several days with this new action/strategy/tank sim hybrid, I've developed a newfound respect for these Spam-in-a-can Army types. I've also developed a fascination with 120mm cannons capable of ripping a shell through targets two miles away (but I should probably seek professional help for that one).

If you're even a semiserious tank game aficionado, you probably won't take too big a shine to *Spearhead*. There are no complex stratagems to follow, so Rommel groupies should stick to I-Magic's *M1A2 Abrams* or Microprose's *M1 Tank Platoon 2* if they want full-blown war game realism. As a matter of fact, why the hell are you turret-heads even reading this review anyway? Piss off and go back to studying your M1A2 owner's manual. Action gamers — keep reading.

Spearhead is not a simple "Duke Nukem in the desert" exercise. It requires thorough manual familiarization (that's the book-shaped object that sometimes falls out of your game box) before you can even hope to light up the Abrams' 1500hp gas turbine engine and search out targets to practice your Dirty Harry routine on. As a platoon commander, you control every crew position on your own M1A2 in addition to up to three other tanks. Driver, gunner, and cupola views are provided, as well as an all-powerful CITY perspective where you can command the tank's targeting and fire control system. All of these stations offer unobstructed visibility devoid of control panels and other visual impediments inconveniently found in real tanks. An IVIS (Inner Vehicular Information System) screen also allows you to



take control of battlefield assets such as air support and artillery.

The rest of the game is essentially about memorizing a couple dozen keyboard commands (fully mappable to a multitouch joystick) and blasting the snout out of some Libyan creeps threatening to overrun Tunisia. The 3D graphics are just so-so, and while they don't hurt the game, they definitely could have jazzed things up a bit.

Although *Spearhead*'s solitary Tunisian campaign and modest collection of single missions will probably exhaust themselves quickly, the excellent multiplayer support (for up to 18 players) and mission-building utility should extend the game's usable life by a few months. The overall experience can be quite enjoyable for undemanding action types if they just remember to RTFM (Read The F** Manual)!

— **ANDY MAHOOD** plans to slap an same metal treads next time his beater *Tayata* needs new tires.



Piss off an M1A2 Abrams driver and look what happens.



Instead of shooting, we recommend squishing infantry.

GRAPHICS

Nice atmosphere, but lacking in the effects department.

SOUND

The sounds of a 72-ton behemoth are well done.

DEPTH

Multiplayer and mission builder add replay value even after the campaign and single missions are exhausted.

DESIGN

Laudable attempt at packaging an action game and complex tank sim into one box.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Attractive 3D graphics
- Solid opponent and allied AI
- Excellent multiplayer options

- Minuses

- Graphic tearing and visual glitches
- Not a lot of single-player depth
- Simplistic for hardcore turret-heads

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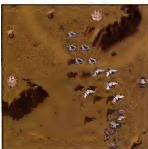
DEVELOPER → Beam Software
 PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
 REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM,
 4X CD-ROM, 100MB hard drive space,
 2MB graphics card
 IDEAL → P166, 32MB RAM, 4MB
 graphics card

KKND 2 Krossfire

Post-apocalyptic war without anal-retentive micromanagement

ACCELE-RATED

It's not 3D, so you don't need a card. That's handy, eh?



Did somebody say McDonald's? Follow me to the fly-up window, men. Happy Meals for all.



Oh my god, noble warriors! We're being attacked by the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Flee the helium!



While explaining a mission, this Further Evolved citizen shows that when you are seeking that radioactive tan, you really need that #2985 sunblock.

Excuse me a moment. Aarrggggghhhh! That's the primal scream of a reviewer faced with another "Clone & Copy" strategy game. How much futuristic carnage and brain-dead computer AI can I stand? What's more, *KKND 2 Krossfire* is a sequel to last year's *KKND* (Krush, Kill & Destroy). Double aarrggggghhhh!

With dozens of RTS games on the shelves, I'm guessing that very few don't know the drill. We're in another post-apocalyptic dustbowl with three armies duking and nuking it out: the human New Survivors, the once-human Further Evolved (proof that Hawaiian Tropic is no help for nuclear tans), and the never-human Series 9 agricultural robots. Each of these hordes comes loaded with varied weapons, transports, and buildings. Pick an army as your home team, then take on 51 single-player missions.

The original *KKND* was praised for an efficient and space-saving interface, excellent graphics, and a wry sense of humor. All those qualities remain in *KKND 2*, and in this go-round, Beam Software got a lot of things right that the original — and plenty of the competition — stumbled over.

The intelligence behind *KKND 2*'s troop movement is about as good as I've seen — unlike the Three Stooges-style bumbling you get all too often in this genre. Troops and vehicles make intelligent decisions about how to get off those mountains and, in one case, a team was separated going around a building but had the smarts to regroup on the other side. Trimmed down behavior commands — fight, guard, stand ground, and a few others — allow you to plan strategic troop movement, instead of analyzing the Freudian subtleties of troop psychology.

Opposing troops also seem to have good AI. They understand terrain advantages and — bad news for humans — can uncover



Ah, the magic and passion of Paris, where young lovers kiss and caress in the sensuous glow of heavy ordnance and watch as the Eiffel Tower falls romantically to the ground.

the weakest part of your defense and focus an attack there.

Media-wise, *KKND 2* is a cut above the norm for this type of game, with vividly detailed graphics up to 1024 x 768 resolution and solid, though routine, use of sound. The best feature is the speed of the graphics. Even with many "little guys" shooting it out, the system never slows. Map scrolling is incredibly swift, and the ability to bookmark screen locations helps you track far-flung activities.

If you master the single-player missions, *KKND 2* provides mission and unit editors. Or you can take on human opponents: up to eight players in IPX or TCP/IP (including computer players, if necessary).

Taken together, the elements of *KKND 2 Krossfire* don't add up to major innovation, but innovation is beside the point in a product category that almost prides itself on being the same old, same old. Still, with fast-paced play, three opposing teams, strong AI, and a nifty sense of humor, this is a sequel that can stand toe to toe with any strategy competitor.

— BOB LINDSTROM invokes the primal scream regularly.

GRAPHICS

Detailed 2D graphics with lively explosions at resolutions up to 1024 x 768.

SOUND

Bangs, blasts, groans, crashes — the usual.

DEPTH

With 51 missions, editable missions, and online play, you'll have plenty to do.

DESIGN

At center, it's just another realtime strategy game, but trimmed options put the emphasis on fun.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- Excellent troop AI and movement intelligence
- Efficient and neatly presented interface that maximizes viewable map area
- Evenly matched forces in well-conceived missions

- Minuses

- Fog of war can obscure your own buildings
- Vehicles and troops can get ricocheted around in complex terrain
- Spoken mission briefings are hard to understand

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Dec '97



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It's Kickoff Time

THE STANDINGS

The only changes in standings this month come in football and golf. For neither of these two sports is the final battle complete, with *Madden 99* and the latest *Links LS* game still to come. Here's how things stand now:

	GAME TITLE	W	L	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	REALISM
FOOTBALL	NCAA 99	1	0	1	0	0	1
	GameDay 99	0	1	0	1	1	0
	NCAA wins a close battle this month, but <i>Madden's</i> on the way.						
GOLF	Tiger Woods 99	2	0	2	1	1	2
	Golden Tee Golf	1	1	0	2	2	0
	Fox Sports Golf 99	0	2	1	0	0	1
	Even though we'd rather play <i>Golden Tee Golf</i> , as an all-around sim, <i>Tiger Woods 99</i> stands on top of the rankings (at least until <i>Links 99</i> is out).						
HOCKEY	NHL Hockey 98	1	0	1	1	1	1
	Powerplay 98	0	1	0	0	0	0
	<i>NHL Hockey 98</i> is still in charge, but with its sequel and Radical's <i>National Hockey Night</i> just around the corner, the competition will surely heat up.						
BASEBALL	High Heat 99	3	0	0	2	3	3
	Triple Play 99	2	1	3	3	2	1
	HardBall 6	1	2	2	0	1	2
	Microsoft Baseball 3D	0	3	1	1	0	0
	The baseball standings are set, but <i>VR Baseball 2000</i> is coming very soon.						
SOCCER	World Cup 98	2	0	2	2	2	2
	Fox Sports Soccer 98	0	1	1	1	0	1
	Sensible Soccer 98	0	1	0	0	1	0
	<i>World Cup 98</i> stays firmly ahead of the pack, but why can't they make a game that lets us join in a good soccer brawl from time to time?						

Well, we're back again, and we're ready for some football. This month we take

a look at the second round of football games with *NCAA 99* rated head to head against *GameDay 99*. Next month *Madden 99* will square off with both these titles for the gridiron crown.

Frankly, we are just happy to have real football back on television. Don't get us wrong, we enjoy other sports as much as anyone does, but there is just something special about football on Sundays that semi-pro frisbee championships, seniors golf, or even the Pan-American cliff-diving championships just don't have. If you do watch football, do it right, because it's only on television 26 weeks a year. Here's how we do it:

MIKE SALMON: Take aspirin, get over hangover, find local sports bar, drink Bloody Marys, then go straight to Hefeweissen, watch Vikings game, pout, whine, break down in tears, watch "ESPN Primetime"

DAN EGGER: Turn on CBS pregame show, set up second TV, turn on Fox pregame, try to find Oilers game, pout, listen to "ESPN GameDay" radio program while watching two silent football games, watch "Primetime" to see how bad the Oilers lost

ROB SMITH: Get up, watch English football (we call it soccer) before game, start with second half of first game and watch the rest of the day's games, count up scores for office pool, adding points for himself when appropriate

ED LEE: Wake up late for first game, turn on second game, hope it's the Chiefs, watch the game, wake up late for work on Monday

— DAN EGGER still thinks the Oilers shouldn't have fired Bum Phillips.

WE NEED A LITTLE HELP



Sometimes we are faced with tough decisions in the production of our magazine, and it helps to get a little advice from our readers. Recently we acquired screenshots and information about a new wrestling game, and we couldn't decide whether or not it was a sport.

We think that pro wrestling is just an amalgamation of other sports. What do you think?

NASCAR fans = the Dallas Cowboys' flabby offensive line + teacher of Albert Belle = the Flamboyance of Dennis Rodman

+ the brawls of the NHL + the grunts of Monica Seles = professional wrestling

All our numbers checked, did you? If they did, email us at WrestlingForSp@pc.com. If they didn't match up, email us at WrestlingInASport@pc.com

DEVELOPER → EA Sports
PUBLISHER → EA Sports
REQUIRED → P133, 32MB RAM,
100MB hard drive space

IDEAL → P200, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2
card, 28.8 modem or better

Tiger Woods Golf 99

A breath of fresh air, but still not as good as *Links LS*

ACCELE-RATED

Since *Tiger Woods 99* only uses 3D graphics part of the time, the difference between cards is not that much. A nominal difference between cards is noticeable, but matters little to gameplay.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



MATROX G200



RIVA TNT



API SUPPORT → Direct3D, Glide

WINDS OF CHANGE

The golfing world was changed forever when Tiger Woods first ran out onto the scene. His thin build and attitude was an incredible change from the traditionally stuffy PGA Tour professional, coaching an entirely new audience for the sport. Other professional sports have been hoping and praying for a similarly unique athlete to join their midst. Here are the top 10 sports for totally unprepared and athletic.

NFL → Someone who can spell his first and last name (and stay out of jail)

NBA → Someone with a 1.25th count and IQ numbering above 40

NBA → Someone with an illegitimate child count below 40

FIFA → Any Brazilian player at whose name doesn't end in "o"

NASCAR → Someone without a "yes" cap show mustache and six-inch sideburns

MLB → Someone who can stand for five rounds without either spitting or scratching his nose

When EA signed Tiger Woods to an exclusive deal to endorse its product, it had a wonderful opportunity to take PC golf in a new direction and reach an untapped audience. In many ways *Tiger Woods 99* lives up to that promise, but in others it falls a bit short. It's these ups and downs that make the game enjoyable for new golf fans, but frustrating for those used to the refined play of titles like *Access Software's Links LS*.

The problems certainly are not with the graphics. In fact, the first thing you will notice is the lightning-fast screen refresh speed, which makes us impatient duffers incredibly happy. Despite the benefit of highly detailed and realistic courses, one minor complaint is that you are not given the ability to override the shot camera, which forces you to watch the entire path of the ball with the game's quasi-3D camera (3D landscapes with sprite-based objects). While this graphics treat adds a nice bit of flash to the presentation without becoming overly annoying, it would have been nice to play from the next lie immediately. Even without this, the speed of the graphics refresh enables an above-average duffer to hack through 18 holes in about 35 minutes, which is tremendously fast for a golf sim.

The game includes cool additions like the super-powered Tiger Shot, which lights up players with special FX electricity. But other additions, like the game's dynamic crowds (which grow in number as you play better), fall a little flat. The Tiger Shot, though a little silly at first, adds excitement when you hit the ball dead-solid-perfect, while the dynamic sprite crowds just look like simple cardboard cutouts used by PGA officials to pad boring tournament attendance



The 3D terrain is most noticeable in situations like this, when a bad rough is nearby.

numbers. Other additions like celebration animations, Tiger Tips, and Tiger Charge (which gives you momentum after eagles and birdies) add little to the actual golfing experience.

Hardcore golf fans will appreciate that *Tiger's* level of detail falls closer to simulation-oriented golf games than an arcade skew. Its myriad of options enable you to find out what it's like to walk in the tacky leather shoes of golfers like Tiger himself, that wild and crazy golfer Lee Janzen, the walruslike Craig Waldorf, and six other tour professionals. (Note: Any references to Lee Janzen as "wild and crazy" are meant as humorous comments only.)

You can also golf at three different PGA locations: Pebble Beach, TPC Sawgrass, and Summerlin, as well as choose from three swing styles and nine gameplay modes such as skins games and full tournament. You can even play at resolutions of up to 1600 x 1200 for software rendering and 1024 x 768 for hardware.

The gameplay is typical for golf games, but the putting is a little touchy for what is supposed to be a professional level of play. Far too many sub-18-inch putts are left too

or more inches from the hole. Despite this drawback, *Tiger Woods 99* has found a place in the upper echelon of its genre, but it still hasn't hit the level set by the *Links LS* series.

GRAPHICS

The super fast refresh rate means less waiting between shots.

SOUND

Typical atmospheric sounds, but whatever you do, stay away from the Tiger Tunes.

CONTROL

Putting doesn't feel right, and midrange shot distances are not intuitive.

REALISM

Ball physics leave a little to be desired.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- Fast redraw
- Electric Tiger Shots
- No comments by Fuzzy Zoeller

- Minuses

- No camera cancel button
- Cardboard crowds
- Lee Janzen never really cuts loose

Tiger tees off for another long drive, and hits John Daly.

DEVELOPER → Tiberon

PUBLISHER → EA Sports

REQUIRED → P133, 32MB RAM,
100MB hard drive spaceIDEAL → P200, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2
card, 28B modem or better

GAMEPAD

ACCELE-RATED

Perhaps NCAA's biggest problem is its lack of Direct3D support. The game looks great on a Voodoo-based card, but it looks bad on just about any other. Tough luck for a lot of people.

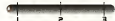
VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



MATROX G200



RIVA TNT



API SUPPORT → Glide only



The ability to rush into a crowd is a perfect example of just how good the running game in NCAA 99 is.

NCAA Football 99

Little brother's kicking some butt

Traditionally, football game developers have focused the lion's share of their development might on the NFL, and then followed with a college version using the same basic engine. These college titles seem to sell fewer copies and get less respect, even though they generally benefit from a few last-second updates not found in the pro version already in stores. College games are also respected less, even though they have a greater variety of teams and plays and significantly more depth.

This year something different happened. NCAA 99 was created from the ground up as a separate entity from EA's flagship, Madden 99, and this individuality has proven to be its greatest strength. NCAA has a feel all its own that starts with its running game (the premier running game in computer

football) and carries over into just about every aspect of the action for just about every breed of fan.

For the action fan, what makes NCAA so enjoyable is that it's the first polygonal football title with a decent sense of momentum. For instance, when a player busts through the line at full speed and pops a quarterback, you can almost feel the hit. When two players hit at reduced speed, their collision is portrayed just as accurately. This makes the big hits more exciting and the shoestring tackles as nail-biting as they should be. The game also manages to make the speed feel right, so you don't have to worry about your halfback getting run down from behind by the other team's defensive tackle.

For the statistics fan, the best part of NCAA 99 is its well-refined dynasty mode. In which you coach a team through a season and then continue to build your program for the next season. If you do well, you draw better prospects, tougher competition, and even the occasional job opening. If you do poorly you can expect a nasty reaction from the alumni association and quite possibly a pink slip.

All that said, the game is not without a few nagging problems. The first and foremost is its lack of decent camera options. You can choose from a variety of views, but none of them feels right. The standard camera is too close to the action to get a grasp on what's going on, and the upper deck camera that becomes the best choice by default is too far away to be of much use. A perfect camera angle

is set up for defense view only. Why this wasn't included for offense is anyone's guess. The other problems include details like sometimes buggy installation and play, an occasionally disappearing ball (on passing plays), and refs who call players' numbers on penalties (this isn't supposed to happen in college football).

Despite these issues, NCAA 99 is one enjoyable football game, and quite simply the best gridiron game on the PC today. If only it had the NFL license.

GRAPHICS

Poor camera angles steal a lot from the gameplay.

SOUND

You can almost feel the hits, but the crowds and bands could have more punch.

CONTROL

Players are given numerous control options that actually work.

REALISM

This game feels as real as computer football gets nowadays.

RATING



+ Pluses

- Great running game
- Realistic speed difference between players
- A sense of power and momentum

Minuses -

- Some bugginess
- Bad camera options
- Disappearing ball

head to head

GameDay 99
vs. NCAA 99

The gridiron battle begins as Sony squares off against EA for the first time on the PC.

GRAPHICS

EDGE
NCAA 99

GameDay looks better than its PlayStation counterpart, but details like lack of player names on jerseys keep it from overcoming the smoother graphics in NCAA 99.

SOUND

CLEAR WINNER
GAMEDAY 99

GameDay's commentary (though annoying at times) adds more to the gameplay than NCAA's bland PA announcer.

CONTROL

EDGE
GAMEDAY 99

GameDay has tighter controls and its Total Control Passing system is more intuitive and adaptable than that in NCAA 99.

REALISM

EDGE
NCAA 99

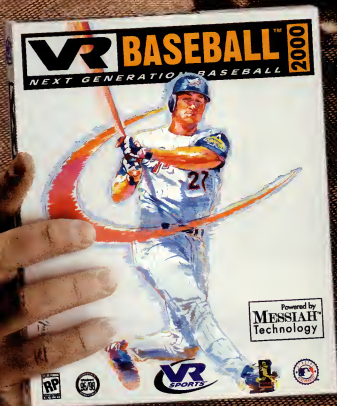
A more realistic running game, wider speed differentials, and believable tackling momentum make NCAA the more realistic choice.

FINAL

WINNER
NCAA 99

NCAA 99 (1-0) wins in OT over GameDay 99 (0-1) simply because it plays more like real football.

(With apologies to A.J. Cartwright theorists.)



THE GAME

ABNER DOUBLEDAY

would have

INVENTED

HAD HE UNDERSTOOD REAL-TIME

deformation and tessellation

TECHNOLOGY.



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www.brightquartz.com

Go to <http://www.pcx1.ign.com/gaming411>: Product Number 60



Introducing the PC game for baseball purists, the most realistic-looking, most realistic-playing game there is.

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DEVELOPER → VR Sports

PUBLISHER → Interplay

RELEASE DATE → Fall '98

THE HYPE → This is the first time an engine from an action game (the *Messiah* engine) has been used in a sports game.

THE HURDLE → The game is shipping at the end of baseball season.

THE HIT → The players look as good as promised, but will gameplay keep up?

VR Baseball 2000

A late contender for the baseball crown shows up for the World Series

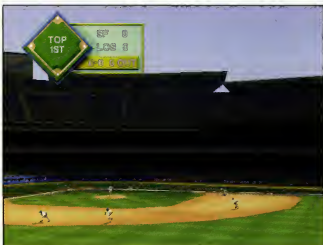
Aren't baseball games supposed to come out in the spring? That question seems appropriate, but according to VR Sports, maybe the conventional way of thinking is all wrong. Because of its unconventional take, the company's late-season addition to the '98 PC sports lineup, *VR Baseball 2000*, is certainly one of the year's most intriguing games.

Baseball 2000 is an extension of VR Sports' PlayStation baseball lineup of games, made to give players a quick but still realistic baseball experience. The series looks to be making the transition well, carrying much of the console playability that PC baseball games lack.

A rapid between-pitch speed enables players to move quickly through a game without having to sit through the usual "isn't it cool that we included this" unnecessary stuff from which baseball games

often suffer. It also benefits from a physics engine that feels right, and for the first time appears to get short ground balls right, letting players know from the second the ball is hit whether it is a pop-up or a high-bouncing grounder.

Even though its console background and polish will give the game a good start, what makes it really stand out from the PC crowd is the *Messiah* graphics engine. In case you care less about computer tech talk than you do discussions on the mating habits of the South African timsouse, I will make this short. The *Messiah* engine is licensed from *Earthworm Jim* creator Shiny, and in contrast to engines like *Quake II* and *Unreal*, it focuses on the character models



While the focus of the graphics engine is on the player models, the stadiums don't look half bad themselves.

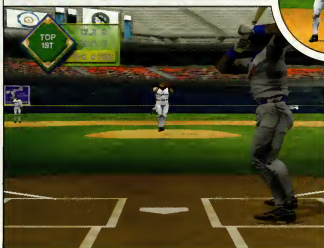
more than on the environments. This focus enables developers to make characters whose detail varies depending on how close the camera is to them. As a result, the game features very detailed pitchers and batters and less-detailed (but still very cool-looking) outfielders. The closest players are rendered in high polygons, while the distant players are rendered in just a few.

All in all, *VR Baseball 2000* seems to be getting the most

from this engine. The character models for batters and pitchers are some of the most organic and realistic yet seen in a PC baseball game. And while the animations are not all perfectly tied together yet, the individual motions are very lifelike. The title has a few things to overcome before it ships, including some framerate issues during pitches, but if these problems are solved, *VR Baseball 2000* could be one of the more enjoyable PC baseball games we play this year.



It's bad enough we have to see this on TV, but why on earth do we have to watch videogame characters scratch themselves?



The *Messiah* engine enables the players close to the screen to look incredibly real.

SPORTS 2000

In the future, the world of sports will be very different. Here are a few of PCOL's predictions for the new millennium.

FOOTBALL → The Washington Redskins will be recruited to the much more politically correct Washington Honey Senators.

BASEBALL → McGwire will hit 500 home runs, but slug price is up to \$65 a piece.

BASKETBALL → Lillard Spivey will finish two-year suspension for running over Atlanta Heat Coach Pat Riley with a lawn mower, and get offered \$12 million for two years to return to the Golden State Warriors.

HOCKEY → The last Canadian team will move to a Southern U.S. state. Still, more Canadians watch hockey on TV than Americans do.

SOCCER → America: still stiff sock.

DEVELOPER → Incredible Technologies
PUBLISHER → Interplay
REQUIRED → P90, 16MB RAM, 90MB hard drive space
IDEAL → P166, 32MB RAM, 28.8 modem or better

ACCELE-RATED

This is a typical flat golf game; you don't need a 3D card at all. You just need a decent-speed computer to run this game well.



Your favorite beer hall game is now available on your home computer. Now all you need is a pool table.

Peter Jacobsen Golden Tee Golf

It ain't perfect, but it sure is fun

This arcade game was made famous in bars throughout the continental U.S., Alaska, and some seedier parts of Canada. Now that it has hit home PCs, we can enjoy some simple, fun golf without wasting quarters better spent on beer or pool. You won't find options like player changes, club torque, and ball dimple depth, but let's be honest — most of us amateur golfers know that none of that stuff helps anyway.

We just want a game we can play without much thought (half drunk if necessary), and *Golden Tee* is it. It's got none of that three-click stuff that every other game uses, instead utilizing your mouse and a trusty reference pad that tells you how to hit the ball. From there you just make the rest up, eventually

learning what separates the perfect drives from the ones that end up in the back corner of the parking lot.

Besides the intuitive gameplay, *Golden Tee* benefits from a clever design and graphics style. Each of the three courses is covered with secrets like the gravesite of Jimmy Hoffa, and better yet, is designed to reward well-played risks and punish those who miss. Because they're not based on real-life locations, the courses are far more original and fun than their traditional counterparts.

Overall, *Golden Tee* is simple fun and just a good game. Its graphics will not stand up against competitors like *Links LS*, but the gameplay more than makes up for the lack of visuals. *Golden Tee* is certainly not for the hardcore golfer, but for the average 20-handicap player, it's loads of fun.

GRAPHICS

Compared to the competition, *Golden Tee* falls well short.

SOUND

Typical crowd sounds and crickets chirping — nothing more.

CONTROL

Simple, uncomplicated, and lots of fun. No three-click bore.

REALISM

Not much here; it's basically arcade gameplay.

RATING ?

+ Pluses

- Fast game speed
- Well-designed (and challenging) courses
- No one shouting "you da man"

Minuses -

- Blocky graphics
- Few options
- The arcade trackball is more fun than the mouse

DEVELOPER → Sensible Software
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM, 25MB hard drive space, 4x CD-ROM
IDEAL → P200, 32MB RAM, 110MB hard drive space, 8x CD-ROM, gamepad

ACCELE-RATED

The tiny sprites don't care whether you've got a \$50 1MB PCI card or \$600 Obsidian; the effects are still the same: small and bad.

As much as I don't want to dissuade any U.S. publishers from releasing soccer games in the U.S. market, between *Fox Sports Soccer* and the now-inexplicable release of perennial English favorite *Sensible Soccer* ("Sensi" to the vets), there are two good reasons for Americans to further dismiss the world's "beautiful game."

History lesson: *Sensi* appeared on the Amiga as a truly wonderful, highly playable soccer game back in, ooh, ages ago. *Sensi '98* boasts a mammoth graphic overhaul, yet the tiny players still stink. The top-down perspective (with a slight angle) is still there, and still makes the gameplay strange, as so little of the field is visible. OK, there are new anima-

Sensible Soccer '98

You have to be English to get it

tions and new moves — those are pluses. Unfortunately, *Sensi* is an incredibly English game. Without a license, the teams don't have the real players but can be customized so you can create a team of your buddies (as has been done with some of the guest teams included in the box).

The gameplay is fast and arcade-like. It's entirely unrealistic, headlong for the "highly playable" moniker. It even misses that since the controls are quirky at best and downright unfathomable at worst.

A semblance of AI is evident, if you look carefully. The commentary is cheap and painless but adds nothing to the flavor of the sport (although the campy grunts from players who've been hacked in a bad tackle have a scary entertainment value).

Replays of goals are shown in a much better isometric 3D view that should have been adopted for the main game. The tiny sprites that were completely acceptable years ago on the Amiga now aren't. Options galore don't save a game



Run little sprites, run. Drink your milk and get lots of sleep, and someday you'll grow up to be real polygons.

that's a fish out of water in the U.S., and sadly is only for those nostalgic ex-pats or true Anglophiles.

— **ROB SMITH** played all the earlier *Sensi* games but still couldn't get to like this.

GRAPHICS

Tiny characters but some neat animation. And the interface screens are painfully ugly.

SOUND

Bland crowd chants, flat commentary, campy groans.

CONTROL

Simple (two buttons only) to a fault. Still takes practice to master.

REALISM

Plenty of scope for longevity with options to create your own teams.

RATING 3

+ Pluses

- Fast, uncomplicated gameplay
- Plenty of options for variety

Minuses -

- Awkward controls
- Too much directed to the English market

ONLINE ARENA

Is Deathmatch Dead?

It has been rightly said that no man is an island (except maybe Marlon Brando, but that's not important right now). To prove that point, all you have to do is look at the most recent trend in online gaming. A new style of deathmatch play is rapidly taking prominence, where once free-for-all reigned supreme. This newfound team play deathmatch may not wipe out the traditional every-man-for-himself deathmatch, but it will have a lasting and significant effect on the games you play.

Since the early days of *Doom*, the typical online player has been a solitary soul, sitting at a computer in a remote location dealing death to whomever crosses his path. But now this lone wolf-style of play is being pushed to the side by another more modern breed that works with teammates to accom-

plish the same goal. This rapid evolution in deathmatch styles is the result of a new wave of multiplayer games that has even the hardcore deathmatchers paying attention, and scrambling to change their style before they become extinct.

The origin of mass audience team play points back to the early

days of *Quake* (doesn't everything related to deathmatch?). In 1996, a *Quake* modification called Capture the Flag and another mod called Team Fortress gave players their first glimpse of action team play, and the response was tremendous.

Seeing the success of these *Quake* mods, software developers began to create their own games focusing on team play rather than individual achievement. Id took a shot first with *Quake II*, but wasn't able to release the game with a promised version of CTF (eventually it came out as a patch). New developer Multitude revealed its team play plans for a fast-paced, online-only shooter called *Fire Team*, which introduced the concept of verbal communication during Internet matches. And now, Dynamix and Red Storm have introduced two team projects: *Starsiege: Tribes* and *Rainbow Six*. Finally, the free-for-all deathmatch gaming public seems ready to embrace the concept of team play. *Rainbow Six* has really struck a cord, receiving rave reviews from just about everyone who has played it.

Because of these titles, the community of gamers who want

more than traditional deathmatch is rapidly growing. As Art Min, project leader of *Fire Team*, said, "A much more mature audience is coming aboard who enjoy the intricacies of team play." Team play has several key advantages over traditional deathmatch including the following:

CAMARADERIE

Nothing feels better than going into competition with a friend. Playing on the same team as a buddy adds additional tension to the gameplay because you are no longer looking out for yourself, but also keeping someone else alive.

TRAINING

Nothing covers up poor skills like a good teammate. Team play enables you to follow better players under the auspices of "covering their backs." Watching what they do in the heat of battle will be where you really learn how to fight.

VIRTUAL LARCENY

Team play lets you get away with things that you never could in the real world. For instance, get together with three of your friends and jump onto a *StarCraft* match

FIVE KINDS OF TEAMMATES IN DEATHMATCH PLAY



Know your partners. They just might save your life.

LEUTENANT RUNNING GUNNER (OR DAN)

THE STYLE→ Lets through levels like a crazy man until the first careful enemy he comes across shoots him dead

THE BAD POINTS→ A guaranteed and early kill

THE GOOD POINTS→ An excellent scout whose dead body marks where the enemy is waiting

CORPORAL SCARED SPITLESS (OR OI)

THE STYLE→ Lets everyone run off into the distance and covers in a hiding point until the enemy comes around

THE BAD POINTS→ Not much help on attacks, and will occasionally rack up a panic kill on a teammate

THE GOOD POINTS→ Will occasionally rack up a panic kill on an enemy

PRIVATE TRIGGER-HAPPY (OR MIKE)

THE STYLE→ Fire, FIRE, FIRE!

THE BAD POINTS→ When in the midst of battle will often kill friend as well as foe

THE GOOD POINTS→ If out of range, he makes an excellent distraction and will almost always bring a few enemies down as he dies

SERGEANT GRIZZLED VETERAN (OR ROB)

THE STYLE→ Knows exactly what pattern to follow in each level and never strays from his path

THE BAD POINTS→ Predictability makes him an easy target for smart enemies

THE GOOD POINTS→ Generally knows his stuff

CAPTAIN FOLLOW ME (OR ED)

THE STYLE→ Assumes command of whatever team he is on, typing commands and leading the charge

THE BAD POINTS→ Annoying as heck, often gets killed while typing commands, takes credit for all victories

THE GOOD POINTS→ Generally a confident fighter, and surprisingly satisfying friendly frag when he gets too bossy



The kinetic chaos of traditional deathmatch won't go away soon.

DIRTY FUN IN TEAM PLAY



The occasional slaughter of your entire team will keep your teammates on their toes and keep your stress level very low.

THE BAD SEED

Quietly begin to kill your teammates one-by-one while the others cannot see you. If you are caught, apologize, then resume your killing spree while no one is watching. If caught again, laugh wildly and blow yourself up. In post-match discussions refuse to talk about what happened, referring to it only as "the unfortunate incident."

GO HUDSON

Wait until you and your team are in the tightest, tensest position possible, and begin to fall apart at the seams. Type in quote after quote of "came over man, game over," "This can't be happening man, this isn't happening," and "in case you haven't been paying attention to current events, we just got our butts kicked, pal!" Regain your composure in future matches, referring to this one only as "the other unfortunate incident."

THE CONSUMMATE TEAM PLAYER

Try to sacrifice your player to save others by jumping in front of projectiles, leaping on grenades, or blowing yourself up as a distraction. In post-match discussions refer to your actions only as "the best of humanity shining through in tragic times."

ANNOYING HIPPIE

Pretend it's the late '60s and give up all forms of violence, following your team around, trying to talk them into dropping their weapons and joining you to find the enemy and reason with them. In the next match, renounce your pacifist ways and shoot everything that moves (including your teammates if that's what it takes to make them believe you are really back to normal).

on battle.net. Then find some unsuspecting schlep and tell him you want to play a free-for-all. As he builds his single unit forces, have each of your team members build a force, barely attacking his base, until you have three massive forces that converge on him in one mighty rush, watching as he slowly realizes that he has been scammed. It's a beautiful thing.

INTRIGUE

Say you are playing a team game of *Rainbow Six*, and your buddy has been repeatedly racking up kills before you get a chance to get a shot in. What would happen if he accidentally walks in your line of fire? Or what if you trip and accidentally fire a round into the back of his head? It was a mistake, right? When you play on a team, betrayal becomes a realistic and ever-present danger, and occasionally an added thrill.

While many developers agree that team play will alter the way we deathmatch, most feel that traditional deathmatch will never die. Tim Willits, lead level designer at Id, said, "We think that team play is becoming a much more important part of deathmatch, but single player is still the purest form and it will continue to live on."

No matter what benefits team play offers, it can never fully eliminate the late-night need to jump online and kill all comers in a bloody battle of *Quake II*. Single player is just a more visceral type



Quake CTF mods like Battle of the Sexes break up the monotony of deathmatch.

of gaming, where you need not think, but rather fire and forget. It's reflex gameplay in its simplest (and most elegant) form, which at times is just what the doctor ordered. A few of the advantages that single play will always have over team play are as follows:

NOTORIETY

When you are the only thing that determines whether you win or lose, all the credit (or the blame) goes directly to you. If you want a real reputation as a big-league player, the best bet is to build it in single-player matches so no one can say your team made you better than you are.

CONTROLLING YOUR OWN FATE

No stupid plans to follow, no



Fire Team was to be the first team play game, but it still isn't out.



Half-Life will soon be followed by a Team Fortress add-on.

buddies to cover, and no boring assignments are distinct advantages for traditional deathmatch. In traditional deathmatch you play on your own and you can do whatever you want, cuz no one else cares.

NO MORAL DECISIONS

Occasionally in team play you are faced with a decision regarding a teammate's safety. For instance, what if your captain was standing between you and three enemies looking the other direction? You have a moral decision to make: Do you shoot at the bad guys, or do you hold your fire to protect your pal? This NEVER happens in traditional deathmatch. (BTW, the correct PCXL solution is to shoot your buddy in the head so he falls faster and gets out of the way so you can register three frags quickly.)

FEWER WITNESSES

Yeah, we know, you want plenty of witnesses when you win, but what about those times you've rocket-launched yourself into a lava pit, or ran over your own grenade? Opponents automatically assume they did something brilliant when you screw up, but teammates know, and they never forget.

The popularity of team play is definitely on the upswing, and within two years, games that don't feature this style of gameplay will seem lacking. Traditional gameplay is not going the way of the dinosaurs, but it will not be the only offering in future games. Just as *Turok* felt incomplete and *Trespasser* needs to be an incredible single-player experience to make up for lack of a multiplayer mode, upcoming games will be judged not only on whether they have multiplayer options, but rather how varied those options are. And to be certain, team play will be one of the most prevalent options in future games.

HOW TO START YOUR OWN CLAN

You and your friends are finally ready for some serious team play, but don't know how you can organize your own group of players? Well look no further, here is PCXL's seven-step guide to creating clans.

1. FIND SOME FRIENDS WHO CAN PLAY

A clan needs strong members with low pings to have a chance to compete. It doesn't matter if someone has been your best friend since the third grade, if his connection is bad, he'll drag the entire team down. Lose this friend early and it will be less painful for all concerned.

2. GATHER BACKUPS AND ALTERNATES

Finding good players is tough, but never be too selective, because often your best players will let you down when a truly big match is at hand. Keep a stable of good backups handy for emergencies. The less real lives they have, the more reliable they will be as a stand-in.

You must have at least five players to register an official Quake clan, and you should have a minimum of four players for a Rainbow Six clan (but eight is far more preferable).

3. NAME YOUR CLAN

This is quite simply the easiest part of the process.

For *Quake II* all you need to do is pick one word that is evil and one that is decidedly not evil, and stuff them together. Examples: *Baby Ducks of Doom*, *The Bloody Olsen Twins*, or *Mo Thereso's Hit Squad*. For *Rainbow Six* you simply have to rearrange the titles of Tom Clancy novels. Examples: *The Sum of All Present Dangers*, *The Cardinals of Remorse*, and *Without Rainbow Storm Rising*.

4. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Being the best means plenty of practice. Join servers where you are not known and play with your team until the angry residents send you packing. Play multiple internal matches, always mixing teams so players know each others' style well.

5. CREATE A WEB PAGE

Don't ask us, but this seems to matter to the official clan guys. Remember to put a ton of effort into your site because the five people who eventually read it will appreciate it enough to read your updated plans files once a millennium.

6. REGISTER YOUR CLAN

The best place to register a Quake clan is at www.quakeclan.com. This site now maintains the official Quake clan list after it became too large for Id Software to manage.

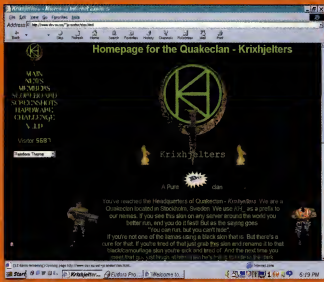
Registering clans for *Rainbow Six* will most likely move from Red Storm's website (www.redstorm.com) to another site, but you can still check out the company's site to see where the best place to register will be.

7. FIND SOME COMPETITION

Start in regular matches on a server where you have low ping, challenge other clans, and if you have to, take your lumps. Once your team feels comfortable, start looking for clan tournaments and put yourselves to the test.

8. BREAK UP

No forgettable game is complete without a nasty breakup. The best idea is to start accusing other players of stealing the limelight, and occasionally frag them in the back. If this doesn't work, marry Yoko Ono. It worked for the Beatles.



Once you get your clan started, you have to have a good website (above). After that, all you need are some cool skins and a devious gameplan.

**IF SOMETHING BLOWS,
WE WON'T LIE
ABOUT IT.**



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Rainbow Six

STRATEGY GUIDE



HOW TO BE A CRACK SQUAD INSTEAD OF A CRACK COCAINE SQUAD

- P1: "All right, let's get those bastards."
 P2: "OK, I'm going left. Who else is going left?"
 P3: "I'll go right. Is anyone there?"
 P4: "Who's that in the field?"
 (machine gun fire)
 P5 (dead): "Who just shot me?"
 P2: "Uh..."
 P5 (dead): "That was me, you idiot!"
 (all hell breaks loose)
 P3 (dead): "Damn! I just got hit!"
 P1: "Where are they?"
 P3 (dead): "He was over by the wall! Get him!"
 P1: "Which wall?... Shit. I died."
 P4: "Throwing a grenade!"
 P3: "Where?" (boom)
 P4: "Whoops... is anyone else alive?"
 (bang)

Is this you? Do you suffer from poor communication and lack of clear purpose? Do you regularly get your ass kicked by squads with superior coordination and team skills? Do your games quickly turn into *Quake* or even worse, "*Quake Rally*?" Well, the *PXCL Rainbow Six* Strategy Guide is your answer. Get the most out of this hella fun game, easily one of the best games on two wheels.

Note: The following tips assume you have installed the v1.02 patch (it's on the PXCL Disc).

GENERAL TIPS

THIS AIN'T UTAKE, BABY
 The sooner you get out of the "run around at top speed and shoot anything that moves" mindset, the longer you'll live and the less pissed your teammates will be. Resist the temptation to try to switch to the rocket launcher, and don't bother looking around for ammo and health packs. The exception is when you're the last one alive on your team, and you think enemies are close by. In these cases, going into a "Rambo" mode can be incredibly effective, mainly because of the surprise factor.

SLOWER IS BETTER

Running around like fleas on crack when your enemies have unerring aim and reaction time and/or heartbeat sensors isn't just suicide, it's humiliating. Take your time, stay frosty (whatever that means), and move from cover to cover. Also, when presented with an enemy target, aim (for the head, preferably), and give yourself a good shot.

FLIP INTO THIRD-PERSON

This is kinda cheap, but it can be effective — especially if you forgot to bring a heartbeat sensor. Use the mouse to peer around as you stay rooted in one spot. Take advantage of this whenever you can, especially in single-player games.

In multiplayer games, it's also a good idea to check your uniform color. It sucks to hesitate when you see someone because you don't know what team he's on, then get shot by him, or — almost as bad — kill him without realizing that he was your teammate.

THE HEARTBEAT SENSOR IS YOUR FRIEND

This little mechanical wonder is a vital tool in almost any situation. It scans a small circle around you at a range of about 10 yards as well as in a cone-shaped area in front of you for about 100 yards.

Zooming in and out of the mini-map is a must for getting long-range intel. Zooming in will let you see what direction the enemy is facing, which is good for all sorts of reasons. Just don't get too recon-happy, as you might get popped while in full-map mode or charge headlong into the enemy who you couldn't see cuz your sensor was pointed up or down. Believe me, you feel like a moron when this happens.

GRENADES ARE ALSO YOUR FRIENDS

(EXCEPT WHEN THEY KILL YOU, THEN THEY'RE YOUR ENEMIES)

When we played the Red Storm developers, the main difference between them and us (besides that they were a thousand times better) was their mastery of grenades. It wasn't uncommon to start a mission and almost immediately be rained upon by a barrage of grenades. Go to the grenade tutorial and practice chucking 'em. Remember to tilt your view up for longer, overhand throws. The key thing to remember is that after you pull the pin, the grenade is no longer your friend.

One advanced grenade tip when you're at a face-off with a door separating you and your enemy: If

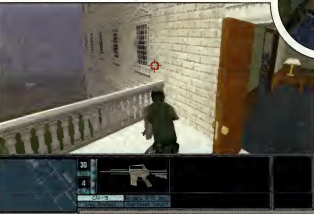
you know his exact position because of a heartbeat reading and you suspect he knows yours, stand about 20 yards from the door with a line of fire to the enemy. Chuck a grenade. As soon as the grenade leaves your hand, switch to your rifle, zoom in, and start firing as soon as the door blows. Chances are, you'll catch 'em by surprise because he was watching to see if you were approaching the door, which you weren't.

Lastly, keep in mind that in version 1.02 the area effect for grenades has been increased from five to eight meters. Flashbangs, too, are more effective, so now they're even more indispensable.

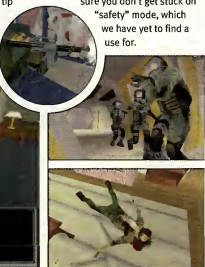
KNOW WHEN TO USE THE DIFFERENT FIRE MODES

A single shot works best for long range, especially when covering a specific area. Nothing like scoring a clean one-shot head kill. The three-shot burst is a good all-purpose fire mode, and autofire is good when you've mastered fire control but is still best used at close range because it tosses bullets around everywhere. Just make

sure you don't get stuck on "safety" mode, which we have yet to find a use for.



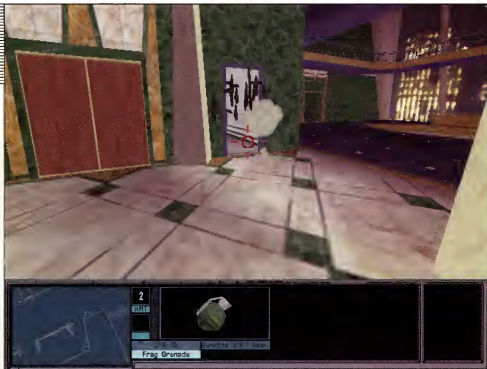
See that guy lurking in the corner? A quick strafe across the doorway should do the trick.



Watch your back, or you might end up like this guy.

GRENADE TIPS

- DO:** Throw the grenade, far away if possible
DON'T: Throw the pin (otherwise known as tapping the fire button and basically dropping the grenade at your feet)
- DO:** Prime your grenade (charge up to max and hold), then wait for the best opportunity to kill the enemy
DON'T: Prime your grenade, then forget about it and throw it at your own squad
- DO:** Throw a grenade at the foot of a door to blow it up
DON'T: Throw a grenade at the middle of a door to make it bounce off and kill you instead
- DO:** Use grenades to kill the enemy
DON'T: Use flashbangs to kill the enemy. You just end up with a pissed enemy



Blowing up doors with frag grenades can be crucial on maps where both teams rush to choke points (such as Skyscraper). You can also shoot doors open if you don't have grenades (shoot the doorknob).

SINGLE-PLAYER TIPS

WAYPOINTS, WAYPOINTS, WAYPOINTS

The task of assigning long, complicated series of waypoints to your fireteams might seem daunting at first, but it's not too bad after you get the hang of it. Also, take advantage of the recon information provided to you about placement of hostages, landmarks, and especially terrorists, and use that to your advantage. Make sure to overlap important waypoints such as bombs. Basically, if you plan right the mission should almost play itself.



Setting up waypoints on big maps can take up a lot of time, but remember that you can save your plan files when you're done.

KEEP YOUR SQUADS SMALL AND USE YOUR TEAMMATES

Four squads of two, all running around different areas of the map, and with overlapping fields of fire, can be unstoppable. Grin in satisfaction as your computer-controlled teammates take down terrorists with lethal speed and efficiency. Take the credit afterward.

USE GO CODES

The skilled use of go codes can open up tons of possibilities in mission planning and execution, and is essential for all missions where you

don't rush through like mad shooting everything in sight (which are most of 'em). For example, you can have delayed squads that go and secure crucial objectives like hostage retrieval after initial squads have swept through the area. Also, having multiple squads wait at strategic locations before all going at the same exact time with a go code can be vital for success.

DON'T GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

You don't get bonus points for killing all the terrorists if the mission objectives don't call for it. Don't put the lives of your squad members at unnecessary risk. Just go in, perform your mission objectives quickly, and get out.

CHIP AWAY AT ENEMIES IF AT ALL POSSIBLE

This is also kinda cheap, but if you don't feel good about rushing around a corner and you know where the enemy is, it can be very effective to creep until you see just a part of him (most commonly his arm) that you can chip away at with single fire or burst until he drops. Be careful, in version 1.0.2, the terrorists have been introduced to the world of pain and will react.

HEROIC MOVES

Like any great game, *Rainbow Six* provides balance, depth, and great gaming moments. Think of Quake, Doom, Duke Nukem — all of them have moments you remember and cherish. Well, this quick list is to help you with some of the best moves and respect among your peers.



→ CROSSFIRE

When a team is performing a pincer move and is closing in from both sides, just walk into the middle and immediately duck. About 80% of the time you are going to die a horrible death, but if just once you manage to have them take each other down, you will go down as a *Rainbow Six* legend.

→ SWITCH TO PISTOL

It's amazing how often a big showdown in *Rainbow Six* is put on hold because both teams have run out of ammo. Instead of trying to reload your M-6, just pull out your pistol and take 'em down. Your quick thinking will impress all who see. The pistol is also faster and more accurate at close range.

→ SUICIDE RUN

If you're dealing with campers (as we do when playing the PC Gamer boys), then crazy is sometimes the right answer. A mad dash into a crowded room is sure suicide, but if you manage to drop that grenade before you go down, you will be a real hero.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Unless you are in maps where the enemies are heavily armored, silenced weapons are the way to go — namely, the HK MP5SD5 and the Beretta gmm g2FS-SD. Although they don't have the range, accuracy, or stopping power of their heavier counterparts, the stealth they afford is absolutely vital on missions involving hostages, and in almost all cases it's better if the enemies aren't aware that you're shooting at them. Along with this, be aware that running (especially in heavy armor) is noisy. If you whip around a corner and get killed right away, chances are you were jangling your way down the hallway.

MULTIPLAYER TIPS

COMMUNICATE, COORDINATE

It's kind of a strange thing to a lot

of first-person shooter gamers, but this isn't your average first-person shooter. Let your teammates know what you're doing, especially before potentially dangerous actions like opening a door, climbing stairs, or running across an open field. Also, combined attacks can make all the difference in the world. Having multiple team members close in on an enemy position or defend a strategic ambush point is much, much more effective than for one person to try to handle it alone. The better you communicate, the longer you'll live (usually).

HAVE A GAME PLAN

This might become clear after you become familiar with a certain map, but in any case it's good to know whether your team is taking an offensive or defensive mindset. Early recon with the heartbeat sen-

sor helps. If there are definite choke points or strategic points in the map each team will want control of them, so it may turn into a race as to who can secure it first. Of course, there are sometimes alternate routes...

GO IN TEAMS OF TWO

It's all about avoiding friendly fire. If you stay in teams of two, not only can you watch each other's backs, but also the point man can scan ahead with his weapon while the other uses the heartbeat sensor.

BRING THE BIG GUNS

When playing adversarial mode, you'll want to bring either the M16 or CAR 15. On maps in which there are extreme long-range engagements such as Road Ambush, the M-16 A2 (best range in the game) is a better choice, whereas on smaller, enclosed maps like Ama-

zon or Skyscraper, go with the CAR-15 and its armor-punching stopping power. For a change of pace, bring along the PDW and its insane rate of fire, or the new and improved shotgun which is positively lethal.

USE THE VERTICAL

Always remember to look up and down, not just level. On levels with multiple levels and catwalks such as Oil Rig, Water Ride, and BioDome it's all too common that you will spot the enemy on a different level but also in a clear line of fire.

WAIT FOR YOUR ENEMIES TO RELOAD

If there's a standoff where you're both behind cover and neither party can really get a clear shot, let your enemy waste ammo if he is so inclined. When you think that he's reloading, pop out and cap him.

KNOW DA MAPS OR KISS YER ASS BUH-YE

Knowing maps is crucial for any game of this type, but for *Rainbow Six* — where strategy is key — tactical elements like cover, ambush points, and flanking movements will separate the elite squads from the rest. And you can't do any of that without knowing the maps like the back of your hand. We've got most of the major ones covered right here.

EMBASSY →

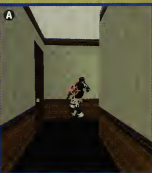


OVERVIEW: A large, two-level building with multiple flights of stairs as well as fire escapes to traverse from floor to floor. A large, open middle will be a likely meeting point.

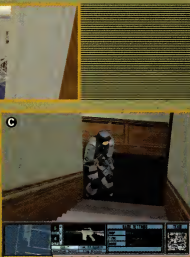
A BLUE (OFFENSIVE):

Run into the main room, climb the stairs, and go through the door opposite. Make a left, then a right at the end of the hallway, and head up the stairs where you'll run into Gold if they're rushing, otherwise make a quick right and into Gold's start room. Search and destroy.

BLUE (DEFENSIVE): Quickly securing sniping positions in the middle room, since you start closer, might serve you well. Just make sure to watch the four entrances.



B GOLD (OFFENSIVE): Take care while going down the closest staircase; a rushing Blue team will be right there. Once down the stairs, open the door straight ahead and you'll be on a balcony in the main room. You might catch Blue running up the stairs opposite. If you manage to control this room, you'll be in better shape. Try alternate means of flanking them, including climbing the vines in front of the building.



C GOLD (DEFENSIVE):

Since Blue holds the defensive advantage on this level because of their proximity to the main room, don't stray too far from your start position. Stay at the top of the closest staircase and snipe down. Alternately, sneak around one of the side staircases and attempt to catch 'em camping.

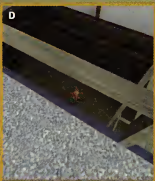
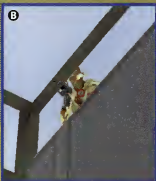
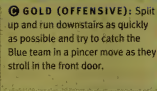
KILLHOUSE 2-STORY →



OVERVIEW: Battles on this map will be fast and bloody — and will most likely hinge around the two flights of stairs inside the building, one of which goes to the roof.

A BLUE (OFFENSIVE): Hug the walls quickly, as enemies on the roof may throw grenades on your position. Once you get inside, try to control the stairs, especially the ones that lead to the roof.

B BLUE (DEFENSIVE): Keep looking up while backing away, scanning the roof. Once you feel it's somewhat clear, establish a defensive position, perhaps right inside the main door.



D GOLD (DEFENSIVE): Try to kill people on the sides of the building right off the bat. Make sure someone holds the wooden staircase to the roof while the rest assume defensive positions at the interior stairs.

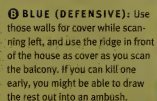


HACIENDA →



OVERVIEW: One of the most balanced maps, this is a medium-size two-story building with many exits, and also with a lot of space around it. A balcony and a shed to the left are two key strategic spots.

A BLUE (OFFENSIVE): You have many options. Rush the sides of the house, sending a few to hold the shed and the two side doors and the others to head right to try to secure the main house. Once in the courtyard, go through the far door instead of the near one because of the latter's second-story balcony, which often has a sniper.



C GOLD (OFFENSIVE): The left side of the house is key, so sending a man or two out there to take out any early rushers when they're not expecting it can be very effective. It's a good idea to stay away from a right-side rush. Be careful, the attacking team has lots of cover on this mission. Combined attacks will work well at rooting out campers by the walls.



D GOLD (DEFENSIVE): Make sure the shed side of the house is secure. The interior balcony of the overlooking door to the courtyard is an excellent sniping spot, as the heartbeat sensor can't detect things not on the same plane. The balcony can work as well, but send two people for safety; most likely you'll be in multiple enemy fields of fire.



MINT →



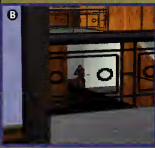
OVERVIEW: Another large, two-story building with two open areas that are great for large-scale fire-fights. The first is the area with the grated floor between the first and second stories, which means you can shoot through it with impunity. It also contains lots of cover in the form of giant money-printing machines. The second area in the front of the mint has a balcony on the second floor, and contains lots of doorways.

A BLUE (OFFENSIVE): Take your chances before they can get set up adequately. Run across the main room and send one group up the stairs and one through the

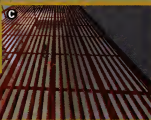
series of steel doors on the main floor. The group up the stairs has to be aware of the door directly opposite as well as the hallway to the left. The team on the main level should look up through the grated floor and try to pick off Gold as they run across.



B BLUE (DEFENSIVE): Take up spots in the main area, preferably one to a room on both the first and second level. Watch the left side of the room, because Gold will either come from the jail cell-esque doors or from the left staircase.



C GOLD (DEFENSIVE): Establish positions in various rooms as well as behind the machines while looking straight ahead and down, and try to make sure you have overlapping fields of fire. Blue can come from only one general direction and two avenues, one above and one below. It can be hard to spot a crouching, motionless sniper in this room because of the grated floor and money chugging around everywhere.



GOLD (OFFENSIVE): The mint area can be hard to defend because there's so much going on in the room. Because of this, it might be advisable to rush Blue before they can get in position.

ESTATE →



OVERVIEW: Along with Hacienda, the best balanced map for multiplayer. The garage and the back door are key to controlling this level.

A BLUE (OFFENSIVE): Not too much cover in the field except if you hang way back, so rush either side to try to control the back door and/or the garage. Once you're in, don't waste any time in flushing out the enemy before they can get settled in. The garage itself has the best door to get into the house, instead of the close one facing the front lawn. When going around back, watch the windowed room for snipers. Going to the second story and flushing it out quickly is an effective strategy.



B BLUE (DEFENSIVE): This level doesn't offer much from a defensive standpoint, except for the trees in the front lawn. Standing back by the wall on the right



C GOLD (DEFENSIVE): Holding the back door can be tough if they also choose to send someone in through the front or side windows. Just stay alert and take advantage of the high ground on top of the stairs. Holding the garage is a matter of getting to the garage itself (take the right door) and looking straight out into the field, staying close to the doorway for cover.

D GOLD (OFFENSIVE): Most likely Blue won't be expecting an attack. Send one team down the stairs and into the garage area. Once you get out of the garage, you can stay by the wall and provide recon while giving yourself plenty of cover. Meanwhile you can send a team around the back on either side of the house for a surprise attack.

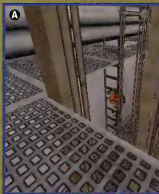


SKYSCRAPER →



OVERVIEW: A smaller, well-balanced map where the defending team can really get dug in the main room, but there are tons of attack points. If both teams are attack-minded, the two stairways to the roof are the control points.

A BLUE (OFFENSIVE): Split up your team and send one through each door — one goes down the stairs and one goes down the elevator shaft. Blow up the locked doors with grenades; time is key. Try to get to the landing right under the doors at the bottom and ambush 'em when they pick the lock.



BLUE (DEFENSIVE): Because of the limiting starting position, there aren't many options except to wait on the roof trying to draw Gold out, which is chickenshit to say the least.

B GOLD (DEFENSIVE): The main room with the circular enclosed balcony may seem like a good spot, but it's tough to defend because of the many, many ways Blue can get into the room. It's better to set up ambushes by the bottom doors to the stairs and the elevator shaft.



C GOLD (OFFENSIVE): Leaving one person to defend the base is unwise; you're much better off trying to attack Blue and catch them off guard. Blow up the doors instead of picking 'em, and try to establish the neutral ground on the stairs and in the elevator shaft instead of in your base. The door to the stairway is unlocked, which will provide valuable time to get to the third story and ambush Blue as they enter the stairwell.



AMAZON →



OVERVIEW: A little unbalanced on the side of Blue because of the roof position as well as access to the bridge, but overall an excellent map for intense, bloody battles. Lots of doors allow for creative strategies. Cool atmosphere, too.

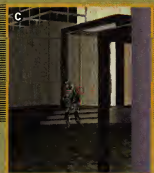
A BLUE (OFFENSIVE): Resist the temptation to rush: Any early deaths can spell the end for your team. Gold only has two doors to pop out of, both of which you can see from your house, so use this to your advantage. Establish positions at the back of your house by the glass, and on the roof if possible. Beware the sniping position at the side door of Gold's house. Sending one person



around back through the jungle path can be effective at routing out Gold snipers. Once you think it's clear, you can run along the bridge to the roof of the Gold house where you can drop down and storm the house.



BLUE (DEFENSIVE): There's a peach of a camping spot right in the starting room: Just open the door to the roof and stand back and watch both the roof and the stairs down. Other good spots are the alcove opposite the back door as well as in the corner room where you can watch the front door and the garage at the same time.



B GOLD (OFFENSIVE): It's best to get out of the house quickly and set up a combined rush to the back of the Blue house. If you can take the back of the Blue house you'll also have access to the jungle path. Be extremely cautious when rounding the corner to the stairs.

C GOLD (DEFENSIVE): Set up defensive points at both sides of your house. The side door corner will let you keep track of no less than four avenues of attack. The fourth, however, is the jungle path, where you might fall victim to a surprise attack if you aren't looking.

Fly the Falcon

Finally, finally, finally, LucasArts has heard the cries of the legions of *Star Wars* fans and announced that its newest space flight sim, *X-Wing Alliance*, will enable you to get in the cockpit of the Millennium Falcon. That's the headline feature of *Alliance*, the latest in the *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* collection. The game will use a graphically enhanced and 3D-accelerated-only version of the *X-Wing* vs. *TIE Fighter* engine.

As a teaser, it's been suggested that Larry Holland's Totally Games, the company that developed these best-sellers, is playing with the possibility of allowing cooperative multiplayer flying of the Falcon. One person will sit in the pilot's seat, and a couple of others in the gun turrets, spinning around picking TIE Fighters out of the sky.

The Falcon will only be available at certain key junctures of the game, but it's going to include some classic action sequences including flying through the tunnels of Death Star 2, one of the main focuses of the Rebel Alliance's anti-Empire efforts.

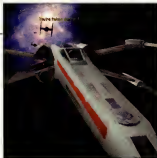
The *Star Wars* space sim series has taken a different slant in each incarnation, beginning with the Rebel side in *X-Wing*, the chance to be the bad guys in the classic



Just five words: Fly the Millennium Falcon, baby!

TIE Fighter, a multiplayer focus in *X-Wing* vs. *TIE Fighter*, and now a single-player, story-driven experience for *Alliance*.

There are two stories running concurrently in *Alliance*, the first being the "you, the player, playing your part for the Rebel Alliance" and the second involving your family, the Azzameens. Along with two brothers and a sister, there's a business trading conflict going on with the Viraxo family. But while both story options are available,



you won't be forced into following the family tale if the action of the Rebels' attack lights your fire.

Alliance is also going to see combat on a grand scale. Hundreds of ships will be involved in mass melees, and your role will be hero rather than just another pilot in a greater battle. Guest appearances will be made by some of the periphery characters to the *Star Wars* myths. Admiral Ackbar barks orders and General Rikeban (who also appears in LucasArts' forthcoming action-shooter *Rogue Squadron*) offers briefings. Cameos will come from Wedge Antilles and Luke.

Rendered cut scenes will propel the story forward between missions, with sound-alike actors being used for the voices. A new, to-be-named prototype, pilotless TIE Fighter will also make its first appearance in the *Star Wars* universe. And it's all ready to be released in the first quarter. Sounds promising.

THE POWER METER

GT still tops the Power Meter, but EA is continuing to move up the ladder as it contemplates the Radical acquisition.

THIS	LAST
1	1
2	4
3	3
4	2
5	-
6	10
7	5
8	-
9	8
10	-

OTHER
CONTENT: 5

HOW
IT'S
SAID

GT INTERACTIVE→

Remains massive by funneling the money from big-selling crap games (like Nam) to upcoming cool games.

ELECTRONIC ARTS→

Acquiring Radical would eliminate a competitor before it gets off the ground.

SIERRA→ We've seen Half-Life, and it's impressive.

3D REALMS→ Still can't argue with games like Max Payne, Duke Forever, and Prey. We just wish we didn't have to wait so long.

EIDOS→ Buying Psynopsis and Crystal Dynamics in the span of two weeks could be considered incredibly gutsy or foolhardy. Maybe they'll ship a non-Lara game before the year 2000.

MICROSOFT→ Despite early criticism, DirectX3D is continuing to pick up momentum in the API war.

ACTIVISION→ Gave Quake III cover the nigger. We are officially pouting.

RED STORM→ Game executives everywhere are paying attention to Rainbow Six's success.

3DFX→ Disappointing sales of Voodoo 2 boards and rising competition have taken the luster off of 3Dfx's crown.

MATROX→ The G400 delivers what was promised, and retailers cannot keep the boards on the shelves.

ID SOFTWARE→ John Carmack lurks in the basement cranking out code.

NVIDIA→ Along with Matrox and 3D, Nvidia has given notice to 3Dfx that the barbarians are officially at the gates.

EPIC GAMES→ Unreal could have taken the first-person crown, but now Epic may never recover from the endless delays of its desperately needed multiplayer patch.

RED ORB→ Laid off 500 people and cannot call but a few games. The only things to crawl out of the rubble are the software equivalent of cockroaches that are Myst and Raven.

FANTASY FRAG

PARTY OF FIVE

WHY WE HATE IT→ Every week it's the same old angst-or-rama. One member of the show gets cancer, dumped, or hit by a cement truck, and the rest cry for an hour. A perfect example: Fox says this season "the Salingers will face a crisis that threatens to break up the family." We say, "big freakin' surprise."

HOW THEY SHOULD BE FRAGGED→

Let the aging cast of "Beverly Hills 90210" join and let the brain-dead writers of "Melrose Place" take over scripting duties. The out-of-luck Salinger family will now be put out of its misery by septuagenarians playing 20-year-olds and plots so convoluted that they make a David Lynch movie look as straightforward as the "ABC After School Special."



The Heat-O-Meter

LATE FALL EDITION

GAMESCAN

FRIENDS OF THE STAFF EDITION

WHAT'S HOT

ALIST FMV→ Westwood signs James Earl Jones and *Terminator* star Michael Biehn for C&C 2 cinematic sequences. The deep-voiced actor and the grizzled action vet say they plan to do their best to uphold long-standing FMV traditions by overacting and stumbling over lines.

INVASIONS→ French publisher Infogrames keeps trying to acquire an American game company. Apparently it thinks U.S. games are neither rude nor slimy enough.

GYMKATA THE GAME→ OK, there is no groundswell for a Gymkata game yet, but we know there is demand for a good Kurt Thomas gymnastics/karate action title, right? Join the crusade at lwannagymkata@pckl.com.

EA SPORTS→ NBA Live 99 will include faces that show expressions depending on what's happening in the game. The company didn't even bother making happy faces for the Clippers.

WHAT'S COLD

VIRTUAL PETS→ *Creatures II* Includes smarter AI, better graphics, and more realistic little creatures. We still can't shoot them, so we still don't care.

THE FORCE→ It seems powers beyond anyone's explanations have delayed LucasArts' realtime strategy game *Force Commander* indefinitely. Why, oh why couldn't this have happened to *Rebellion* Instead?

WHEN IT'S DONE PART I→ *Heart of Darkness* finally hits shelves five years after it is first announced. The game looks great... it we were all still living in 1992.

WHEN IT'S DONE PART II→ *Doinkotono* is delayed again. Another postponement for an Ion Storm game? Who saw that one coming? Oh yeah, everyone.

DEAD CELEBRITIES→ An online gaming news site reports that John Romero is dead without checking its facts. Hey, we thought we had the copyright on Fantasy Frags and dead celebrities (and not checking facts).

UPHILL BATTLES→ The 3Dfx company takes on Microsoft's DirectX 6 with Glide 3.0. It's like David vs. Goliath, but this time Goliath can afford a few slingshots of his own.



DEALING WITH BREAKUPS THROUGH GAMES

... WITH THE HELP OF ELIZABETH KUBLER-ROSS, AUTHOR OF DEATH AND DYING

So you've been dumped — it happens to everyone. Maybe your girlfriend wasn't so happy about all the time you spend playing games. Maybe she wanted to go to better restaurants than Arby's, or maybe you're just a world-class screw-up (or maybe she found your copy of *PC ACCELERATOR*). Whatever the case, getting dumped sucks, and there is no better way of dealing with it than playing computer games (and that includes calling the ultra-sickening Dr. Laura radio program). Here are the five stages of dealing with getting dumped, and how to get through them with computer games.

DENIAL→ During this phase you don't need to play any games because she really didn't break up with you, she just needs her space.

ANGER→ Once you realize how much of an idiot you were not to realize you were dumped, a good *Quake II* deathmatch is the best way to vent those frustrations.

BARGAINING→ Perhaps this should best be called the beg-

ging stage. During this phase you should play the games she enjoys (*Myst*, *Starship Titanic*, or *Theme Hospital*) and tell her you will give up *Unreal* if it means she'll take you back. Not that it will do any good.

DEPRESSION→ Now that you understand that bargaining is no good, it's time for some good, old-fashioned moping. No game is better to mope with than GT Interactive's *Deer Hunter*. Grab a beer and realize

just how pointless your life is as you sit in a virtual forest waiting for a pixelated virtual deer to walk in front of your pixelated crosshairs.

ACCEPTANCE→ Eventually you will realize that a great girlfriend comes around quite often, but great games are a far more rare commodity. Now's the perfect time to play *Rainbow Six*.

Because no one famous would help us out with Gamescan this month, we sent our very own Dan Egger to find people he knew to talk about a bunch more upcoming games.

TEST DRIVE:
OFF-ROAD 2

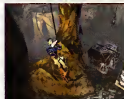
DEVELOPER→ Accolade

PUBLISHER→ Accolade

RELEASE DATE→ Winter '98

PREVIEW BY→ Dan's mechanic

"Are you kiddin' me? Off-road racing, real licenses for the Hummer, Land Rover, and the V12 Dodge Ram pickup. This game has exactly what I'm lookin' for. The graphics look great, but right now I'm playin' *Monster Truck Madness*, so there's stiff competition. Hell, I might even pop this game in my Ford's CD player for the rockin' music by bands like Gravity Kills and Sevendust. By the way, your engine is sacker. I need \$3,000 by Tuesday."



BENEATH

DEVELOPER→ Presto Studios

PUBLISHER→ Activision

RELEASE DATE→ Summer '99

PREVIEW BY→ The stoned guy who works at Dan's local 7-Eleven

"Dude, I liked *Tomb Raider*, and this third-person adventure title seems a lot like it. Lots of climbing, exploring, and adventuring in some spooky underground caves. But I was pretty bummed when I found out it was just going to follow Jack Well, some normal guy, not Lara or Indy. Man, that's harsh. What really tripped me out was when the dude started using his rope to like swing around and climb — I've never seen Lara do that. Hey, you gonna buy that beef jerky or are you just going to chew on it and put it back like usual?"



SHATTERED REALITY

DEVELOPER→ KO Interactive
PUBLISHER→ OEM pack-in only
RELEASE DATE→ Early '99
PREVIEW BY→ Dan's managing editor

"Dan! This is late! I don't care if Shattered Reality is an amazing-looking game that is one of the very first to require Voodoo 2 acceleration. And I know this enables the game to have amazing graphics, intense special effects, and neat underwater gameplay. But you have to turn your work in now! Don't make me bring back Rupee." (Rupee is a monkey who filled in for Dan during the production of issue 2. It was widely debated whether to fire Dan and hire Rupee full-time. A bad case of rickets solved the issue once and for all. But who had the rickets?)



EXPERT POOL

DEVELOPER→ Visual Sciences
PUBLISHER→ Psychonics
RELEASE DATE→ Q3 '99
PREVIEW BY→ The guy who keeps beating Dan at pool

"Dis' computer game manages to get the gritty realism of pool down pat, and show not only da pool table (da bone-fide Kasson tables) but da pool hall as well. Not since Dittka brought da Bears to da Super Bowl have I been so excited about a game. Even though it don't look quite as snazzy as VR Pool 2, da ball moves exactly like it does in real life, and I like facing off against real opponents in real places. I can even challenge my ol' buddies back in Chicago over the Internet. I 'specially like da pool hall wid da table stained by a nasty chalk outline, dat's my kind of place. Ya wanna play another round? I think you're due, really."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



PAC-MAN, 1980



PAC-MAN, 1998

PAC-MAN

In the '80s, no one in videogames was bigger than Pac-Man, but in the '90s, the classic leading man fell on hard times. But after a stint at the Betty Ford Clinic, the Pac's back, co-starring with Marlon Brando in *The Island of Dr. Morau*. It is this start of a comeback?

TEAMWORK VS. GOING IT ALONE

In this month's Online Arena section, we discuss in-depth the trend toward team play in multiplayer games, but the battle over team play and going into deathmatch on your own has been raging for far longer. In real life, the question is asked on a daily basis. At PCXL we have taken some of the things we have learned in our many years of deathmatch experience and applied it to real life to find out once and for all which is better.

THE BAR PICKUP

TEAM PLAY: One buddy drinks heavily while the other protects him from hitting on girls who look like the love child of Bea Arthur and Steven Seagal.

GOING IT ALONE: You get really drunk and try to pick up a girl with an Adam's apple.

ADVANTAGE: Team play

CATCHING A FOUL BALL

TEAM PLAY: One guy fights off the nearby drunk fat guy with no shirt while the other guy uses karate to hold off a pack of belligerent sixth-graders who ditched school to watch the game. The ball is caught by an old lady in the seat behind you, but the fighting part is plenty fun.

GOING IT ALONE: You end up flattened amongst piles of crushed peanut shells after the fat guy and the kids grind you to a bloody pulp.

ADVANTAGE: Team play

JUMP-STARTING A CAR

TEAM PLAY: One guy hooks up the cables while the other points and says, "Red is positive — did you hook it up right? Remember, red plugs into the terminal with a plus sign — that's positive."

GOING IT ALONE: You blow up the battery but you don't have to listen to anyone tell you how to do something as simple as jump-starting a car.

ADVANTAGE: Going it alone

CLEANING THE APARTMENT BATHROOM

TEAM PLAY: Both guys try to talk the other into doing all the work and eventually decide that they'll never get the apartment deposit back, so they'll just "hold

it" until the lease is up.

GOING IT ALONE: You realize from the very start that you will never see your deposit and eventually start using the bathroom at the gas station on the corner.

ADVANTAGE: Draw

SETTING THE CLOCK ON THE VCR

TEAM PLAY: One guy reads the manual while the other pushes buttons and swears. Eventually the clock stops blinking, but the time is set at two hours and 37 minutes behind the actual time. A handy reference chart and calculator are later added on to help people decipher the actual time.

GOING IT ALONE: You cut a piece of black electrical tape and stick it over the flashing light.

ADVANTAGE: Going it alone

PICKING A MOVIE AT THE VIDEO STORE

TEAM PLAY: Both people begin to eliminate movies that they have already seen until the only movies left in the theater are touching dramas starring Meryl Streep and bad action movies starring Jeff Speakman. Eventually both people leave in disgust.

GOING IT ALONE: Maybe Meryl Streep will be naked in this one.

ADVANTAGE: Team play (by a long shot)

WINNING \$10,000 ON "AMERICA'S HOME VIDEO"

TEAM PLAY: You take turns throwing bowling balls at each other's groins until someone is caught on film with the perfect reaction.

GOING IT ALONE: You rig a camera to take a picture of yourself dancing on a table as your pants fall off and then fall on a chair, hitting your groin.

ADVANTAGE: Team play — at least there is a 50-50 chance you don't have to take a shot to the groin in this scenario

STEALING CANDY FROM A BABY

TEAM PLAY: One guy distracts baby, the other guy steals candy.

GOING IT ALONE: You steal candy from the baby.

ADVANTAGE: Draw

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY

Even if you are one of those stuffy, quasi-sophisticated Northeasterners, a corn-fed middle-America farm boy, or a half-baked California beach bum, you know what I'm talking about. Some of the best-looking girls you've ever seen grew up in a trailer park. Take, for instance, the heroine of Ripcord's *Space Bunnies Must Die*, **Allison Huxter**. As a part-time rodeo star and full-time truck-stop waitress, Allison is a stereotypical, but nonetheless beautiful Jerry Springer fan. Whether it's her Southern accent, too-tight Wranglers, or halter top, something about Allison makes for a nice alternative to the prim Britishness of computer gamedom's other buxom adventure heroine, Lara Croft.



OTHER OPTIONS

IF ALLISON DOESN'T FLOAT YOUR BASS BOAT, HERE ARE A FEW WHITE-TRASH ALTERNATIVES.



Betty Hae

Sure she's just a cartoon, but she is twice as hot as anyone Ziggy ever dated.



Sherry Turner

Would she be half as cute dressed up as a bitter Alanis Morissette wannabe? We don't think so.



Dolly Parton

The original hillbilly babe is still one of the cutest. (Except now Donna Douglas, in her late 60s, is still running around in her costume, ruining the fantasy.)



Tracy and Heidi

Hey, how'd they get in here? We truly apologize for any harm that this image may have caused our readers.



Christina Aguilera

She may not be a white-trash hottie, but she plays one on TV.

GAMESCAN



WARZONE 2100

DEVELOPER→ Pumpkin Studios

PUBLISHER→ Eidos

RELEASE DATE→ Summer '99

PREVIEW BY→ Dan's prison pen pal

"Warzone 2100? It's a @#@# real-time strategy game based on a @#@# beautiful 3D-accelerated graphics engine. This @#@# game gives you the ability to design your own @#@# units, which use some @#@# advanced AI. In fact, if you @#@# get tired controlling your forces, you can put them under the command of a \$#@! computer bot, which learns your style and @#@# mimics it. If you aren't @#@# sick of real @#@# time strategy games yet, this is another one. Did you send me any cigarettes, you #%^\$?"



REVENANT

DEVELOPER→ Cinematix

PUBLISHER→ Eidos

RELEASE DATE→ Q1 '99

PREVIEW BY→ Dan's devil-worshipping video store clerk

"Yesss, finally an RPG to fill the void as I wait to get my hands on *Dablo 2*. *Revenant* is full of wickedly dark and evil creatures and is modeled with 2D backdrops and 3D characters. It also gives you the ability to use 20 magic spells (with up to 80 variations on the basic spells), five weapon sets (with three to five weapons per set), and 25 pieces of armor. The environments, designed by fantasy illustrator Den Beaulieu, are downright nasty indeed, even if they look suspiciously like a certain Blizzard game we all love so much. What? You want to check out *Terms of Endearment* again? Wouldn't you rather watch Kate Jackson in *Satan's School for Girls*?"



VIPER RACING

DEVELOPER → Dynamix

PUBLISHER → Sierra

RELEASE DATE → November '98

PREVIEW BY → Dan's used-car salesman cousin

"Son, I hear you're looking for a good game, and have I got a deal for you. *Viper Racing* features the official Dodge Viper GTS license, some incredible-looking vehicle models, and three levels of physics realism. And you can upgrade your Viper and race against a ghost car of your previous performance. I'll tell you what, I can give you \$50 for your AMC Pacer — nobody's ever going to make a game based on that."

FIGHTER SQUADRON:
THE SCREAMIN'
DEMONS OVER EUROPE

DEVELOPER → Parsoft Interactive

PUBLISHER → Activision

RELEASE DATE → Winter '98

PREVIEW BY → Dan's great uncle Will

"I don't like your attitude, boy. I flew planes in World War II, and I know exactly what it's like, so you young morons who haven't ever fought in a real war should just shut up. This computer program they call *Fighter Squadron* is one of the most realistic sims I've ever seen. Planes can have pieces blown off by enemies, which accurately affects the physics of the entire aircraft. I remember when the Nazis had me pinned down back in '44. In those days we controlled our planes with bread sticks and I... hey, are you listening? ... come back, I'm lonely. Please?"

YOUR GIFT IS OUR REWARD

Last month we pretty much sold our souls for free stuff from non-game-related companies. Looking back, we think we got the better end of the deal. Our first free gift came from the folks at Playboy Home Video. We received an early copy of the company's hard-hitting (but still soft-focus) look at the women of Generation X. This in-depth study told us about modern women who like to "golf, surf the Net, pierce their tongues, and drink double lattes" (we aren't making this up). The box failed to mention that apparently Gen-X girls also like to dance in slow motion with little or no clothes on. We'll forgive that error.

We do want to let our readers know that we will sell out not only to huge corporations with multimillion-dollar marketing budgets, but we will also take free stuff from the little guy. Maybe you want to publicize your local brew pub by express-mailing us a plate of buffalo wings, your place of work by mailing us a brand-new pneumatic nail gun, or maybe you just want to publicize your girlfriend with some pictures. We aim to please.



Just send your letters and free stuff to:
Sold Out
PC ACCELERATOR
150 North Hill Drive
Brisbane, CA 94005

GUERRILLA CAMPAIGN

No, we are not calling our readers guerrillas, though judging by some of the letters we received after our first issue, that may not be far from the truth. While we admit we are not as big as some of our competitors, someday we will be. For the time being, our esteemed (by 50-year-old bearded fat guys)

competition has the marketing muscle to ensure great placement for its magazines, while ours sometimes languishes, hidden behind *Bass Fishing Monthly*.

Our muscle lies with our rabid and often out-of-control readership, so we offer the following challenge to our fans: Find a newsstand where PC ACCELERATOR is buried behind other magazines, take a picture, then rearrange the newsstand so that PCXL stands out above

the rest. Be creative, and if necessary, be really, really sneaky. The reader who comes up with the most creative, cool, and at least partially legal display will receive a prize collection of T-shirts, random bad games that we wouldn't play (or have two copies of), the occasional great game, assorted

peripheral devices, and whatever else we can throw in a box.

Just send your before and after pictures to:
Guerrilla Campaign
PC ACCELERATOR
150 North Hill Drive
Brisbane, CA 94005



DREAM GEAR

FALCON MACH V



The Falcon Mach V may not get you chicks, but its 463MHz processor, 128MB RAM, single-slot dual Voodoo 2 SLI board, and ground-thumping sound system will make you a hit with the chess club.

On a previous life, my office machine was a Falcon Northwest PII 266. And boy, was it a dream machine for a gamer. Even DOS setups were covered (yep, I still had a couple of DOS games hidden away on the hard drive).

Well, I got a new Falcon — the new Mach V. Gamer heaven doesn't really get much better. Check this for a drool-worthy list: PII 450 processor (that appears cooled to 463MHz), 128MB RAM, 9.1GB Ultra-Wide SCSI hard drive, and wait for it, the STB Velocity v4400 16MB Riva TNT plus Quantum's Obsidian 2X-24 24MB single-slot SLI card with TV out. To complete the feature list, there's also a Plexor 32X SCSI-2 CD-ROM drive, Iomega Zip 100 drive, and the Diamond Monster MX200 sound card.

Not bad, eh? It gets better. The sound system accompaniment is incredible. There's the \$800 Acoustic Research "Cutting Edge" six-speaker Dolby surround system, partnered with the sub-woofer from hell, offering some 200 watts of power. It's a complex system to both set up and handle. Not for the faint-hearted, the sound system really takes advantage of a stereo/TV connection for



For more details on the system, go to www.falcon-nw.com.

full programmability. Without that you have the more basic functions available, which are really all you need unless you're fine-tuning select 3D surround sound settings.

By the way, the monster, 21-inch Optquest Viewsonic V115 monitor makes viewing Unreal in all its 3Dfx SLI mode glory an eye-burning experience.

So how does it work? Well, it's not easy to configure, and since the tweaks and details worked into the system by the Falcon engineers push the limits, there are chances of meltdown (or your brain trying to get around the magnitude of power being arranged). I'd have preferred the

9.1GB drive in partitions, even though the installed Win 98 incorporates FAT32 so you're not losing space. But it's a minor gripe.

Falcon's support is also fantastic, from the personalization of the included documentation (highlighting how every last detail is at least double-checked — even the spelling of your name) to the entertainment value of working with STB's beta TNT drivers — we got them sent as soon as updates were available.

Of course, it ain't cheap, but a system like this absolutely screams gaming goodness. If you want to know more, contact Falcon for specifics to get a system configured to your liking.

HOW FAST DOES IT PLAY MY GAMES?

GAME	RESOLUTION	FPS
Micro Millennium	800 x 600	56.2
FALCON MACH V	800 x 600	104.4
UNREAL	RESOLUTION	FPS
Micro Millennium	800 x 600	27.63
FALCON MACH V	800 x 600	41.33
	1024 x 768	36.56
		[E=100]

Falcon Northwest, 800-258-6779, www.falcon-nw.com

Micro Millennium PII 450, 16MB RAM, Voodoo 2. Quake II scores using Unrealsm, 1.0, demo map, dm4. Unreal scores using Luthar's FPS100demo for Unreal (see Cyclist).

NOW PLAYING

These games should be available by the time you read this, but weren't available to review in this issue



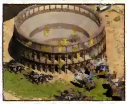
STARCRAFT: BROOD WAR

DEVELOPER → Blizzard

PUBLISHER → Blizzard

PREVIEW BY → Dan's comic book aficionado housemate

"Ooh, Ooh, *Brood War* is going to be the greatest thing that has happened to me since they published my letter in *Fantastic Four* 326. This add-on is giga-cool because it includes six new units, three new campaigns, and 100 new multi-player levels. The game is put together by the guys at Blizzard so you know it will be cool. Do you mind closing the door? Your room smells funny."



AGE OF EMPIRES: THE RISE OF ROME

DEVELOPER → Ensemble Studios

PUBLISHER → Microsoft

PREVIEW BY → Dan's nightmare with Colonel Klink and Soupy Sales Dream Klink: "Age of Empires mach ech spass und diese expansion sollte sogar noch besser werden. Ausserdem hab ich meine hose auf meinem kopf." (Age of Empires was truckloads of fun and this expansion should be even better. I also have pants on my head.)

Dream Soupy Sales: "Hey hey, Rise of Rome has four new civilizations, new units, and three brand-new campaigns. It also adds bigger maps and new terrains for your civilizations to explore. I wonder if they fixed the bugs? And Wilhelm, those are my pants."

NOW PLAYING

**BLOOD II:
THE CHOSEN**

DEVELOPER→ Monolith
PUBLISHER→ GT Interactive
PREVIEW BY→ Dan's abusive next-door neighbor
 "I don't give a rat's @\$\$ about this *Blood II* game, even if it is built on that smooth new LithTech graphics engine everyone's talking about. I don't even care that it lets you choose between four unique characters and a host of disgusting weapons like the atrocious skin-ripping flayer. I just want you to turn your freakin' TV down when you're watching 'Yan Can Cook.' That guy really annoys me."

**BARRAGE**

DEVELOPER→ Mango Gritz
PUBLISHER→ Activision
PREVIEW BY→ Dan's ex-girlfriend
 "Hey, I thought I told you never to talk to me again. You say you just want to know what I think about *Barrage*? It's a 3D shooter that is as flashy as *Incoming*, features awesome special effects, plays extremely fast, and makes your 3D accelerator worth its purchase price. It took a while to find a distributor, but this gorgeous title finally found a home with Activision, but I bet you don't like it because it doesn't let you shoot people or animals. You sicko. Now, you have three seconds to get off my front porch or I'll call the police again."

DEVELOPER SPOTLIGHT

Cyclone Studios



Shortly after this picture the Cyclone staff added carrots to the pool and made developer stew.

Have you ever wanted to be a game developer? Well maybe you should think again. Sure, we all

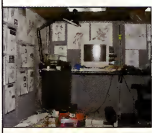
have good ideas for new games or concepts that will make an existing genre better than ever before, but few of us know the sacrifice it takes to make development work. A perfect example of this deep commitment is the maker of *Uprising*, Cyclone Studios.

The typical game development schedule is around 18 months, with 12 months of hard work and six months of deadline-laden torture. So like just about everyone else in the industry this time of year, the guys at Cyclone practically live at the office, finishing games like *Uprising 2* and *Requiem*. It's not strange to arrive at 9:00 in the morning only to find developers leaving at the same time to catch a few Zs before they return. This kind of schedule is common in the industry, and it's understood that long hours are a part of the job. It's this round-the-clock atmosphere that makes

development so challenging and also makes the developer's working environment a reflection of the people who spend so much time making games.

STATUS

Number of people wearing ponchos on an average workday day→3
 Number of people who can explain why employees wear ponchos in the office→0
 Number of fridges in the studio→2
 Number of fridges that smell like goat cheese→1
 Average depth of water in Cyclone's wading pool→16 inches
 Average depth of slime in bottom of wading pool→0.7 inches
 Number of inflatable ducks in wading pool→1
 Number of project directors in wading pool→1
 Number of PC titles currently under development→2 (*Uprising 2* and *Requiem: Wrath of Angels*)
 Number of guys named Kudo→1



The environment created by Cyclone's developers says a lot about the company. The morning and daytime are most often the quietest times of the day, but the building livens up by the late evening. Most of the developers prefer to have the lights off during working hours, which they say helps them be more productive. We decided to test this and found out that when you flip the light switch on, the result is groans, shrieks, and other sounds made by developers whose eyes have long since grown useless in normal lighting conditions.

While this may sound like a draconian working condition, quite the contrary seems to be true. The developers appear to enjoy working long hours in the company's serene offices. Judging by the oft-used wading pool on the back deck, the biweekly Connect Four tournaments, or the frequent take-out from a fine local establishment called Redneck Earl's, it's apparent that the guys at Cyclone enjoy what they do, even if it takes a long time to do it.

Memories ...

We like to think of ourselves as a tight little family here at **PC ACCELERATOR**, and when a staff member leaves, it affects the entire dynamic. **Bill Donohue** joined our magazine on September 13 and quickly became close to each and every one of us. His online news stories and *Shadowman*

preview were an integral part of the very magazine you have in your hands. But to the shock and amazement of us all, he turned in his resignation on September 15 to join our sister publication *PSM*.

Wiping the tears from his eyes, Editor in Chief Mike Salmon said of Bill, "The time we had together was short, but come to

think of it, Bill was short, too [intense sobbing]. Can we talk about something else?"

Executive Editor and longtime Brit Rob Smith remembers the good times. "Bill went to lunch with us. I think he got a sandwich. Pardon me now, I have to join a soccer riot."

Another staffer, Dan Egger, said, "I'll miss him. He always had

something nice to say. He used to call me @%%\$ face. What a great guy."

Things will never be the same without Bill, but we will go on bringing you the best gaming mag that your hard-earned dollars can buy. In closing, we will leave you with the immortal words of Bill himself, "If you ain't having fun, you ain't got @%%\$@.



Bill Donohue: September 13-15, 1998. He will be missed.

I'M MAD AS HECK

We were flooded with letters from our first issue — some offended, some amazed — so we decided it was time to bring back our easy-to-use offense form to help those who feel it's just too difficult to find the offensive stuff on their own.

Just cut this guide out, and send all your gripes to:

I'm mad as heck!
c/o PCXL
150 North Hill Drive
Brisbane, CA 94005

Or just email us at easilyoffended@pcxl.com

Dear PCXL staff,

I could stomach the crassness in issue one and the juvenile humor found in issue two, but this issue is simply

- ☐ beyond reproach
- ☐ beyond the bounds of good taste
- ☐ beyond belief
- ☐ Beyond the Planet of the Apes

Not only was I offended, but you quite possibly have hurt the feelings of the following people when you

- ☐ accused David Lee Roth of stuffing his thighs with cucumbers
Offended party: Mikhail Bayrshnikov
- ☐ made fun of horrible celebrity car accidents
Offended party: Editor Rob Smith, and others with good taste
- ☐ made a crass sexual innuendo about famous gymnast Mitch Gaylard
Offended party: Greg Lauganis
- ☐ poked fun at a tragically deformed alien
Offended party: Gérard Depardieu
- ☐ discussed the arousing effects of gunfire
Offended party: Charlton Heston
- ☐ used the phrase "computerized baaty"
Offended party: Alyssa Milano's mam
- ☐ insulted J.F.K., Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan
Offended party: The good, decent people of this country

- ☐ Insulted Bill Clinton
Offended party: Nobody, really
- ☐ used the phrase "Lybian creeps"
Offended party: Colanell Muammar Khadoff
- ☐ coined the phrase "glistening veneer of liquid poop"
Offended party: Mister Hanky
- ☐ fragged that megahunk Scott Wolf
Offended party: Readers of Tiger Beat
- ☐ insinuated that the French are both rude and slimy
Offended party: Rude and slimy French guys
- ☐ made fun of Paula Cole's hairy armpits
Offended party: Lilith Fair attendees
- ☐ used the term "Ma Theresa's hit squad"
Offended party: The starving, crippled children of Calcutta
- ☐ made fun of starving, crippled children
Offended party: The ghost of Mother Theresa
- ☐ brought to mind the image of Meryl Streep nude
Offended party: Any nonblind readers
- ☐ Made light of the prison pen-pal system
Offended party: Robert Downey, Jr.
- ☐ referred to Michael Jackson as having an appetite for young human flesh
Offended party: The Frugal Gourmet
- ☐ reported on Charlie Sheen's affinity for hermaphrodite hookers
Offended party: Eddie Murphy
- ☐ trivialized the tragedy that is rickets
Offended party: Rupee the monkey

You should stop making fun of celebrities

- ☐ because they have feelings, too
- ☐ because they are better than us
- ☐ because they can't make fun of you
- ☐ stop? Are you crazy? You haven't made fun of Michael Landon yet

You guys should

- ☐ grow up and quit being so offensive
- ☐ grow up and get a real job
- ☐ grow up with a fatal disease
- ☐ never grow up

Thank you for your time,

X _____



NEWS



PREVIEWS



GADGETS



REVIEWS



FEATURES



INTERVIEWS

NEXT GENERATION

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FEEDBACK

→ So far, our love letters have far outweighed the hate mail, but we welcome your criticism as well. Your letters have provided endless inspiration, conversation topics, and, of course, fodder for ridicule in the PCXL office.

LOVE LETTERS

Your magazine has breathed new life into the sometimes ho-hum PC gaming magazine world. You guys know what you're talking about, yet you keep me on my toes trying to figure out what the heck "Clinto de Mayo in the middle of a Michael Bolton concert" has to do with PC gaming. I love you guys (and Carrie).

— Darryl Kelly II

Your premier issue is so fraggin' good that I didn't need the urge to take a massive dump as an excuse to actually sit down and read something from cover-to-cover.

I'm looking forward to reading the next issue's letters from all the outraged idiots out there who don't have a sense of humor.

— Sal

I am an employee at a store of a large electronics chain, and of all the magazines we get at our store, yours is by far the best. The biting sarcasm, sexual innuendo, and sheer outrageousness are exactly what we've all been looking for in a magazine. We all looked at your magazine at work the other day and spent hours laughing at all the little things in it, from the Real vs. Unreal column (anything with Ron Jeremy in it is great), to the perfect Interest Gauge.

I must give you high marks and kudos on a wonderful first issue, and I pray that a one tells you to tone it down or make it nicer. Some of us appreciate cruelty and sarcasm, and we occasionally will salute those responsible. If I didn't get this magazine for free, I'd be sure to subscribe. Great work guys, keep it up.

— Robert Goldberg

Sirs. No, can't call you sirs. I read that stuff and there wasn't anything there that warranted a sir.

Dudes, nah on the dudes. Way too sharp to be considered dudes. Nerds? Too topical and too irrelevant to even be considered. I have no way to address you. But I can state ... good job!

— Ric Green

You have the honor of being my favorite gaming mag. No other mag I've read to date tells the brutal truth like your staff does.

— Sam Laitinen

Finally a game magazine with BALLS. I'd just about given up on print game magazines with their biased, boring content since I can find more honesty and better coverage online. My subscription is in the mail. Excellent mag ... flat-out superb. You guys go balls deep.

— Mitch Wilson

Just read through the new issue and really enjoyed it. I loved the "25 Greatest Guy Games" — original, well-done, and funny. And of course I got a kick out of the "Q/I Killers" feature, especially since three of our games were well-rated. :)

— Scott Miller, Apogee Software, Ltd. and 3D Realms Entertainment

OLD LADIES LIKE US, TOO

I want to express my feeling and thoughts on your magazine. PC ACCELERATOR is a breath of fresh air. I have emailed all my friends and advised a subscription. I hope that you will allow me to continue to receive your publication as I am female, over 55 years of age, and think your magazine is very suitable for me.

I am a deputy sheriff assisted to the patrol division and work extra details and holidays just to buy more stuff. At present I am playing Unreal on a PII 400, 128MB RAM, 12GB of SCSI hard drives, a #9 AGP 8MB VRAM, Monster II 8MB, and a

Monster MX200 sound card backed up with an SB 64 Gold pushing four Yamaha speakers and a subwoofer. So please excuse the fact that I am female. It should be noted that I am married to a man, have two children, and am not a fan of Lucy Lawless, but have played a large number of the "25 Greatest Guy Games" and was late for roll call just once in my career because I was playing Wolf3D.

I have never before been moved to write a fan letter. Long live PC ACCELERATOR.

— Val Flynn

COMPLAINTS

I do have a complaint, I love PCXL and am subscribing post-haste. But only one picture of Denise Richards? Come on. Get with it. I'm waiting.

— John Frost

Just picked up the September issue and laughed so hard I almost gave birth to something. Anyhow, on page 72, in the *Trespasser* subtitle, you spelled "breathe" as "breath." Unless of course you meant to, and that's cool.

Keep being manly.

— mAD MONK-

Of course we meant to. What do you think we are, a pack of idiots?

For the past two days I've been able to look over your magazine and peruse your website. I like the Information I get. However, your prose leaves plenty to be desired. Just about any analogy you offer has to do with sex or too much testosterone. Being a beneficiary of both sex and testosterone, I can relate. But your overuse of juvenile language detracts from the potential quality of your publication. I am not offended by the language but by its overuse. Furthermore, your constant search for the superlative, when trying to be funny, continuously lessens the desired effect you are trying to achieve — it becomes banal and tiresome. Although I believe language

shapes thought, I am by no means advocating you clean up this publication for "Sesame Street" usage. But please ascribe me (the reader) some intelligence. Lewd remarks and low-brow humor can be extremely funny, but not when you make it the reason for your existence.

As per your mission statement, I am not "easily offended" and I do "enjoy raucous laughter." I flocked to PC ACCELERATOR because you do provide that "breath of fresh air." But PC ACCELERATOR's posture and demeanor on the whole sadden me. What you must think of me — your reader?

— Marc Simony

Doh! I feel the urge to say something lewd and obnoxious ...

I haven't been able to get any of the demos to work on my 300MHz with AGP. I get an "access violation at address 004595DA7 in module PCX EXE read at address FFFFFFFF." Love the interface, just wish I could get the demos to work.

— Marcus Wildting

We know about this, and it's bugging us as well that we couldn't fix it in time for our first disc. Our programmer assures us it's been taken care of. We suggest using the much less flashy Windows Explorer as an emergency solution.

Not til a few hours ago did I get my grubby little hands on PCXL. I went to over 30 retail locations in the last four days, and I was seriously losing hope. No one I visited in the Toronto area had heard of or received a shipment of your fine mag. This is such a cool mag. It deserves everyone's attention. I hope it was just because the first copy had a limited print run or something!

— Violence Jack

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-PC Gamer, January 1998

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Why Third-Person Sucks!

Before everyone starts jumping up and down screaming foul, please hear me out. My opinion is that the third-person perspective is not effective in action games. Why? First off, there is the cursor issue. Since the majority of the screen is taken up by a character's backside, there is no place to put a cursor. Therefore, aiming is either done with auto-aim (which sucks) or simply isn't very effective (which sucks as well). I mean, can you imagine *Quake II* with no cursor? Or even worse, with auto-aim? Thresh and all other Quake gods would be nonexistent because the game wouldn't actually require the skill of aiming.



Third-person games put something onscreen that you can't shoot. This is wrong.

tures, and other poly-created eye candy).

No third-person, no Lara Croft, right? Exactly, but *Tomb Raider* is not an action game. It is an adventure and a very good one. However, the action in *Tomb Raider* sucks and always has. Why? Because the third-person view requires auto-aim, meaning showdowns with dumb-ass bad guys and extinct wildlife are merely an exercise in button-mashing. In games like *Heretic II*, *Dark Vengeance*, *Shadowman*, and *Max Payne* all look very promising, but are these issues going to be overcome? My guess is that *Max Payne* will be the only one of these four to figure out a way around these dilemmas, mainly because it has more development time and is being overseen by 3D Realms.

Until the many problems of the third-person perspective have been solved, I would rather that there always be an option to use the first-person perspective. Yes, I want variety in games, but true variety comes in story and gameplay, not camera positioning. In my action games I want cursors, not polygonal asses.

— MIKE SALMON

The next issue is camera control. This is handled one of two ways, both of which do not work. Some games will use a floating "smart" camera that adjusts to the environment, which causes glitches and frequent shifting that make a good game of deathmatch pretty much useless. The second method is to give control to the players — hello, don't the players have enough controls trying to run, jump, and shoot? I think so. Another problem is that in a third-person view the game engine must draw a detailed polygon figure, which means there are more polygons onscreen, slower framerates, and less-detailed backgrounds (or fewer textures, level design fea-

SECOND PERSON

There you go again, all fingers at the keyboard and little clear thinking. Horses for courses, mate, that's what it's all about. It seems that what you're really pissed about is *Heretic II* claiming to be an action game. Right, it can't be, since third-person, as you suggest, lends itself to auto-aiming, thus reducing the amount of skill you need to shoot stuff, and awareness you have of your environment.

But can't you take a little auto-aiming? (I mean, thinking about our last *QII* deathmatch, your aim wasn't what could be described as, er, good.) Isn't it a fair tradeoff to get a better sense of your environment, a better understanding of the logistics to get from A to B and all that adventurelike fluff, and be able to shoot the wildlife without worrying about manic circle-strafing?

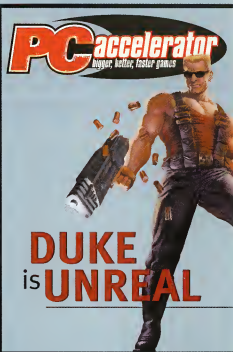
I'd argue that *Tomb Raider* wasn't even a good game (certainly not part two) as it was so damn boring — but this game type is getting better. Upcoming games have more detailed locations, better pacing of the action (as in rope swinging — the death-defying leap kind, rather than the trigger-finger-twitching kind), and better AI. So give them a chance. They've got to be better than watching more of Lara's ass. Well, perhaps...

— Rob Smith

NEXT MONTH

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Exclusive uncult footage of Clinton sticking it to Kenneth Starr — plus we'll have some more stuff on games or something



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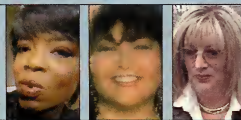
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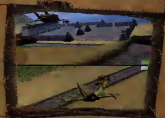
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